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FORTY YEARS IN MY BOOKSHOP

HABLOT K. BROWNE ("PHIZ")

Watercolour illustration for "Nicholas Nickleby"

"The Gentleman next door declares his passion for Mrs. Nickleby"

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FORTY YEARS IN MY BOOKSHOP

BY

WALTER T. SPENCER

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

THOMAS MOULT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN
COLOUR AND BLACK AND
WHITE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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I DEDICATE THESE MEMORIES TO MARY ELIZABETH SPENCER, THE BEST LITTLE WOMAN THAT EVER LIVED: BUT FOR HER DEVOTION THEY WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN RECORDED.

46/67-G

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HABLOT K. BROWNE ("Phiz")

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"The Gentleman next door Declares his Passion for Mrs. Nickleby."

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NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

THE material for the illustration of this book has all been selected, in consultation with the publishers, from drawings and volumes in my possession at the time these memories were written.

Certain of the pictures are actually referred to in the text; of these I need say nothing further. Others, however, chosen for their intrinsic interest, do not naturally find a place among my reminiscences and I hope therefore I may be forgiven for calling attention to certain among them.

The important series of water colours by "Phiz" were bought by me from the artist's daughter. They bear a close but not an absolute resemblance to five of the etched and wood-engraved illustrations that appeared in the first editions of, respectively, "Nicholas Nickleby" and "Barnaby Rudge." Whether the water-colours were painted before or after the publication of the novels I am unable to discover.

The interesting series of Cruikshank adaptations of famous Hogarth subjects formed part of the collection of Sir Benjamin Warde Richardson, the well-known temperance enthusiast and Cruikshank's patron during the last twenty years of his life.

The album containing Lamb's sonnet "Cheap Gifts" I obtained from a member of the Cresswell family.

I may add that not only the "Phiz" water-colours, but also the autograph copy of Dickens' poem "Autumn Leaves" and the corrected proof of the article contributed by Charles Dickens the younger to "All the Year Round," were lent by me for exhibition at the Devonshire House Ball in 1921.

W. T. S.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I SHOULD like to express my appreciation of the kindness or Sir Henry Dickens, K.C., Sir Sidney Colvin, Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, Mrs. H. P. Sturgis and Mr. J. T. Wise, who revised the passages in this book dealing with facts in which they are specially interested and personalities with whom they are familiar.

I am also indebted to members of Mr. Thackeray's family and to Mr. John Murray for their kind permission to reproduce the water colour of "Mrs. Perkins's Ball," and to Mr. Gordon Browne, R.I., for his consent to the inclusion of the four "Phiz" illustrations to Dickens.

W. T. S.

INTRODUCTION

By THOMAS MOULT

All afternoon the tarnished shadows of a London winter have quickened in the corners and crannies of this upper room, gathering depth and bulging clumsily forward, a little at a time. Now they grope across the quaint black-lettered pages I am quietly turning, but I pretend I do not notice them. Soon enough as it is I shall need to turn on the bold bright sprays of light which I reckon fitter for another world than mine, a world not afar off, but just outside yonder windows. There it is, well-nigh too actual to believe in : a breezy, goose-skinned, blue-nosed, red-eyed, stony-toed, tooth-chattering sort of place, Charles Dickens might have called it : big and noisy with townsfolk and their hard unsentimental activity, their automobiles and omnibuses assaulting the windows from the street as if thunder were clapped against the trembling glass in chunks while they beat unendingly by. Since I last raised my face that outer world has brightened feverishly with many lamps, each an electric splendour of this new brand or that new brand, dizzily moving or

motionless, stark white or coloured no less starkly. A very different life, to be sure, is being manifested there than this in which nothing stirs and nothing stares, and ripe old prints and caricatures, lampoons, letters, and substantial books are a man's whole company. The contrast could barely be greater, although had I been passing along the pavement below as a mere member of that hubble-bubble crowd, I might for ever remain unaware as they that this grey, commonplace city building harboured such quietude ; a dusty, cosy quietude, walled into a room grown very brown and comely, and sweetly smelling of mellowed skins and good-grained woods, and cloths pounded long since to paper.

Of course I am not such a stranger to the life beyond my snug boundaries as each time I come inside them I like to imagine. I know quite plainly that across the street other casements are facing these : that they are unshuttered, and that in the lighted offices at the back of them I might this very moment find other men, concentrating on dull business as if they loved it. The floor beneath them is built with shops, all a bewildering dazzle of glass and arc-flares streaming, each grotesque fact the product of an enterprise which to this room appears most alien. An unassuming label nailed against the building declares *New Oxford Street*, and at a distant corner is a subscription library, modish and alluring, while away behind are the British Museum and Bloomsbury. I know this already, just as certainly as I know

that from those opposite windows the shop-sign directly under my room will read *Walter T. Spencer*, with the door-number "27" showing above two windows heaped full of curious colour-drawings and worn volumes and bundles of century-old novels with the name "Charles Dickens" or "William Makepeace Thackeray" on their faded paper wrappers, exactly as they came out first, with a whole people's knowledge and approval, part by monthly part.

But I am as little inclined to put aside my book and take the three steps across to a window for a view of yonder different world as I am to whiten the evening by a burst of garish lamplight from the ceiling. With the dusk on it, that framed almanack in homely block type, hanging behind the door through which Mr. Spencer himself went from me a while ago at the call of a customer, looks proud, important, and particular: under the electric glare it would be pathetic, wistful, and unspecific. *Bell's Weekly Dispatch*, it advertises: "the original Sporting Newspaper, contains 32 closely printed columns, and is the Largest Weekly Paper in England, at the price of 8½d." The date is a hundred and twenty years ago, and, as I cannot help noticing, the *Weekly Dispatch* office was then at 139 Fleet Street, not Carmelite House. Part of the advertisement is a series of illustrations in colour, a racing event included, the horses' legs outstretched fore and aft in a fashion which the snap-camera has long since shown to be lacking in veracity. The other

immediate reason why I wish to remain here in the shadows is provided by the book I hold in my hand. Maybe more than electric light would be needed to break the spell of this magic work, but I am not hazarding anything. It is one of two volumes, bound solidly after the style of its own departed century, as strong as ever, though shabby from the press of countless fingers. There is just enough daylight lingering for me to trace the wording on the title-leaf: THE LIFE AND STRANGE SURPRIZING ADVENTURES OF ROBINSON CRUSOE OF *York*, MARINER, Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an un-inhabited Island on the Coast of AMERICA, near the Mouth of the Great River of OROONOQUE: Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but Himself. *With* An Account how he was at last as strangely delivered by PIRATES. Written by Himself. London: Printed for W. Taylor at the Shop in Pater-Noster Row. MDCCXIX. . . .

The title-leaf of the companion volume is different: THE FARTHER ADVENTURES OF ROBINSON CRUSOE, Being the Second and Last Part of His Life, And of the STRANGE SURPRIZING ACCOUNTS OF HIS TRAVELS Round Three Parts of the Globe, Written by Himself. To Which is added a Map of the World in which is delineated the Voyages of ROBINSON CRUSOE. . . . A map, I may add, that ought never to be omitted from any edition now being published of that outrageous "fake" story, so delectable a map it is, and so integral a part of the book it becomes once your

eyes behold it. And if I had my way the publisher's end-pages of advertisements would be reproduced as well. "Poems by Mr. Dryden, 6 vols. 12 mo.," and "Mr. Congreve's plays and poems, 3 vols., 8vo." : see what we find well-nigh topping the list! Down below them comes: "Beautifully Engraved on Copper, The Tunbridge Beau's Love-Letter, wherein the Art of Love is Represented in above 60 Hierogliphical Figures : and that tender Passion described after the most moving Manner." Next on the list is, quite in accordance with the nature of things, "The Epsom Lady's Answer to the Tunbridge Beau's Love Letter : Price 1s." Then follow quickly, "The Hampton Court Letter, being a reply to the Epsom Lady's Answer," and "The ingenious and diverting Love Letter in Hierogliphicks, Number 4, being the Country Assembly's Answer to the Hampton Court Letter." We begin to suspect that the game is our publisher's, and that it will go on and on ; but apparently the public grew tired of it, for abruptly there comes a book entitled : "Dr. Halley's Description of the Total Eclipse of the Sun, the 22nd April 1715."

"Mr. Spencer," I said once, while I fingered these same two volumes, "how much money shall I require to save up before they are mine?" The figure named in answer quite easily took all the breath out of my body. It was only proper that it should, as I realised when he pointed out that they were probably the finest copies in the

world, both volumes being in their original covers as issued, and in condition and freshness exactly as if they had been issued only yesterday morning! Now there was a time when, like many another earnest reader, I scoffed heartily at a tale of that kind. I would even have scoffed at the idea of two among the common india-paper volumes of the Wessex Novels advancing from 4s. 6d., their published price, to sixteen pounds each, simply because the preliminary leaves bear the written signature, *Thomas Hardy*. But my association with one whom I truly admire as a master-bookseller and with his amazing bookshop has lasted long enough for me to understand what it is to love an old volume for its own sake, and to experience the strange, unforgettable thrill at a sight of the self-same page that once was looked upon, even as I look upon it to-day, by the master whose writing it bears. A certain unique company of men and women called the Dickens Fellowship provided my calf-years with many a tickle of fun; but all that is over, for I do avow that if from to-day onward I might devote my life to collecting every scrap of *Dickensiana* I would be well contented. Indeed I might go to my grave happy, after an association with letters like that. How I envy Mr. Spencer the discovery he tells of whereby the engraver of a "Pickwick" title-page was shown to be so bewitched by Sam Weller that he actually spelt the name on the hostelry sign in his engraving with the letter "V" instead of "W"! Charles Dickens,

I understand, was an exacting sort of hero in actual life : short-mannered oftentimes, and sometimes overbearing as well. He demanded your full devotion, an undivided homage. And to-day there is just as little room for anyone to be half-hearted about him. Merely to dip into his books, reading them, say, at the rate of one a year, is hardly possible. Or at least it is not possible thus to capture the full savour of a sweet rare spirit which captivated the generations so consistently that Dickens has never needed to recover public patronage, despite the solemn young fellows of latter-day criticism who, as Mr. Spencer smilingly points out, are announcing that Dickens is coming " back to his own " ! A lover of this great writer and great man is of necessity an extremist. Readers are wholeheartedly his, or they are—yes, they are Thackerayans ! And this for the reason that what we call the " Dickens spirit " is an attitude to life, unique, and inspired in its fulness by no other creative artist, not even Oliver Goldsmith.

Mr. Spencer has taught me this, if anyone can teach it ; and not for nothing, as I now see, is he regarded by the fraternity of bibliophiles, English and American, as the chief living authority on Dickens from the collector's standpoint. I count it a piece of exceeding good fortune that he has at last been led to talk in his own delightful way through four of the forthcoming chapters about the widely and well-loved novelist with whom, as he says in manly confession, " my heart is." To me these chapters seem a definite contribution

to *Dickensiana*, especially when, in their concluding pages, he marshals for review the figures that moved around the master. Ghostly figures some of them have been heretofore ; but henceforward they are vivid before us, in all their lovable waywardness and unshamed weakness, their go-as-you-please sort of existence that somehow seems coloured a rich corn-cob by contrast with the pale, exacting life of the average author of our later day. All through the book, indeed, we come face to face with men in their own re-invoked environment who, could they be suddenly brought into ours, would be as hopelessly out of place as might be Tom Echo, Bob Transit, and those other elegant Corinthian cads who set out to see " life " in London ninety-six years ago and still flaunt buckishly through the pages of the two rare, uncut volumes in pictorial boards entitled " The English Spy," that stand on a shelf just outside the reach of my hand.

Let us take a peep at Mr. Spencer's bookshelves for a while. We shall require to pick a dainty footway across to them, for at 27 New Oxford Street you do not merely find it difficult to avoid bringing down a high stack of volumes with your shoulder—so closely they hem you in that you may do easily what Leigh Hunt said he liked to do with his books, lean his head against them. You must also have a care lest you put your feet where they are not wanted, or you are sure to be like an explorer among the nuggets on the floor of a fairy gold-mine ; stumbling over folios and

portfolios of such rarity that one would think their guardian shockingly careless were it not that many years ago he was obliged to surrender in the kindliest battle of all, the battle 'twixt a man and his books. Every good reader has to fight it sooner or later, for a library tends to become a veritable Frankenstein, eating up elbow-room and bearing down like an avalanche on space, long before its creator realises it to be no longer his slave. Where else than on the floor, for example, could have been placed this precious album of Aubrey Beardsley's unpublished drawings, among which, if you turn them over, will be discovered an exquisitely-worked original design for "The House of Sin," and (not at all in Beardsley's customary manner) a wonderful portrait of Balzac (fit, surely, after the artist has done with him, to be the Satanic hero of Milton's "Paradise Lost"), for an edition of the Comedie Humaine? Where else this gigantic heap of George Cruikshank's unknown drawings and paintings, inexhaustible, easily the vastest in the country? Not even the South Kensington Museum collection can equal it, for a man might start out to make a list of them this very day and find himself still working on it when the next anniversary comes round of the great satirist's birthday! Or this set of "Boxiana" in the original wrappers, well-thumbed and tattered, that would leave an enthusiast of the knuckles and gloves a hundred pounds poorer in pocket if he were to gain its possession? Surely there is only the floor remaining for them.

Except on the walls, upstairs and downstairs, where hang Dante Gabriel Rossetti's chalk drawings, colour designs, and designs for stained glass; a rare example of William Blake's draughtsmanship; a charming water-colour drawing by Thackeray that belonged to his friend Locker-Lampson; and a painting by Thomas Webster, R.A. (familiar to those who attended the Devonshire House performances of "Not so Bad as We Seem," two years ago), of black-hearted Ralph Nickleby in his office refusing to lend poor Kate any more money; and a hundred other examples of "extra" illustrations to Dickens, especially the beautifully coloured additions to "Nickleby" and "Barnaby Rudge," by the superb "Phiz" himself:—except on these few walls, I say, there is nowhere an inch uncovered by scarce and often priceless books. I hesitate to begin any attempt at a description of the thousands in this room alone: glorious fellows everyone of them, gleaming royally in their steadfast gold uniforms, dignified even in their rags, each a treasure to be yearned after, wistfully, and for the most part vainly. There are Doctor Johnson's "Plan of a Dictionary," bearing the date 1747; "Verses to the Memory of Garrick," by R. B. Sheridan; "An Unpublished Note to the Sixth Chapter of the History of England," by T. B. Smollett; Oliver Goldsmith's "The Traveller" (1765), and "She Stoops to Conquer (1773); as well as "The Life of Richard Nash" and "Retaliation: by Doctor Goldsmith, with epitaphs on some

of the most illustrious writers in the metropolis " ; and, belonging to that same era, certain unfamiliar volumes not quite so impressive in their associations, of which the following is a specimen wording on the title-page : " RIDER'S BRITISH MERLIN : for the year of our Lord God 1768. Adorned with many delightful and useful Verities, fitting all Capacities in the Islands of Great Britain's Monarchy. With Notes on Husbandry, Fairs, Marts, High Roads, and Tables for many necessary uses. Compiled for his Country's Benefit by Cardanus Rider (7d)." Turning the pages I find that the aforesaid Tables include a list of Members of Parliament for the year—a melancholy sight ! . . .

There are also an example of the 1797 issue of Coleridge's " Poems," a first edition of " Confessions of an English Opium Eater," a presentation copy of " Enoch Arden," and a volume in the original covers, well-worn, of " Poems by Two Brothers " which Alfred and Charles Tennyson published in 1828. Sir Walter Scott's " Chronicles of the Canongate " is represented in a copy by which I have long been enchanted. For accompanying it are some proof-sheets corrected in the author's handscript, from which we learn that the original title was " The Canongate Miscellany, or Traditions of the Sanctuary." Similarly Leigh Hunt's " Heads of the People," in two volumes, is accompanied by a portion of the original manuscript of " The Conductor " ; his " Men, Women, and Books " by the autograph

notes used during the preparation of that section wherein he criticises female beauty; and his "Book of the Sonnet" by the autograph preliminary draft of his essay on the sonnet. And there are two lordly copies of Samuel Rogers' "Poems, 1834," with the price printed on the label, £2 12s. 6d., and "Italy, a Poem," published at £2. That estimable gentleman's circle of readers must have been as select as his breakfast parties.

How lovingly these first-edition volumes have been preserved by their former owners! Sometimes they are enclosed in fragrant leathern cases, cunningly fashioned so that they may stand on a library shelf and look like beautifully bound books themselves instead of the mere outer casing of a book. And there are boxes with contents more precious even than scarce volumes. Mr. Spencer has row after row of them. I take them down, carefully, one by one. . . . The actual manuscript of an early unpublished version of George Meredith's "Amazing Marriage" is here, and that of the later version, in this instance accompanied by the MS. of "A Creed." Here is his unpublished manuscript of "Disarmament." Here is the unpublished manuscript of "Peter's Pence," Thomas Carlyle's translation from Kohler, made in 1855. Some of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poems are here in her own original handwritten copies, and Swinburne's "Ballad of Dead Man's Bay," and "Phaedra," written out on large foolscap. The original MSS. of Dickens's "Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings" and "New Uncommercial

Samples " stand side by side with his manuscript of " An Appeal to the English People on behalf of the Italian Refugees in England." As for Robert Louis Stevenson, about whom few living people can teach us so much as Mr. Spencer can (and does, before his talks are ended), I was going to say that little can make this well-loved writer so vivid to me as when I peep into the box that holds the first draft manuscript of " Katharine to K. D. M.", or of " Stout Marches Lead to Certain Ends," and " I for my Wife the Sun Uphold "— a first line, this, of which any poet might be proud. More vivid than anywhere else, however, is " R. L. S." in the unforgettable picture which Mr. Spencer himself draws for us of the author of " Catriona " sipping brandy and water one wet evening thirty-seven years ago in the shop-parlour downstairs.

It is too dark to make out the lettering on these magical old volumes and manuscripts any longer, and I am still so reluctant to switch on the lights that while I listen for Mr. Spencer's footsteps returning up the booklined stairs and passages I sit musing upon yonder shop-parlour whose interior you may view from the street below, and I think of one after another of its own especial treasures and memories. Many great men have walked and talked in that tiny parlour, though barely one of the million folk who go hurry-scurrying past the shop-window in a day can have the least notion that not only collectors and dealers, but poets and statesmen, authors and artists with world-renowned names,

have been enticed through the modest portals of this Bookman's Paradise. Browning, Meredith, Hardy, Sir Richard Burton, Oscar Wilde, Richard Jefferies, Sir Luke Fildes, Walter Pater, Sir Sidney Colvin, Andrew Lang, Ernest Dowson, Sir Philip Burne-Jones, Sir Henry Irving, Aubrey Beardsley, Gladstone and Augustine Birrell, Lord Rosebery, and Charles Dickens's sister-in-law, Georgina Hogarth. . . . Not simply in Mr. Spencer's mind are his mementoes of these and their great predecessors. Above his writing table are two whole shelves of letters penned by Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens—penned, indeed, by every conceivable man of note in our own and earlier times. London is more romantic than ever as we note the addresses on some of those letters. There is new colour come into its drabness even through the comparatively insignificant fact that Wilkie Collins wrote from 90 Gloster Place, Portman Square, or that Edmund Yates wrote from Lancaster Lodge, Lancaster Gate. . . . And among the letters themselves is a sheaf of Lord Nelson's, and there are certain signed documents of Napoleon. There is an album into which Charles Lamb has copied his own and his sister Mary's poetry, and there is a group of his letters also, that made a fascinating article in a recent issue of the " London Mercury." Perhaps the most poignant of those hundreds of letters, everyone poignant in its particular way, is that which hangs in a frame among the books on the shop-parlour wall. It was written by Charlotte Brontë on the night of

her wedding-day, June 29, 1854. "Dear Ellen," it began, "I scribble one hasty line just to say that after a pleasant enough journey we have got safely to Conway, the evening is wet and wild, though the day was fair chiefly, with some gleams of sunshine. However, we are sheltered in a comfortable inn. . . ." Alas for the gleam of human sunshine which had come that same day into poor Charlotte's clouded life! It was almost as fleeting as those other gleams. Accompanying the letter are locks of her hair and of her father's, with their portraits also. The frame which holds these simple relics was formerly part of an oakwood pew in Haworth Church. Somewhere else in Mr. Spencer's shop are five or six almsboxes, used at the church in Charlotte's time, and a chair that stood at the porch. And in a glass case are a tiny pair of Charlotte's slippers. . . . What different emotions are roused in us by another keepsake of the same kind, the tortoise-shell trinket-box that Lord Nelson gave to Lady Hamilton!

Whenever I visit the shop downstairs I like to take a peep into the nook where is harboured that quaint miniature literature which had such a tremendous vogue among our great-grandparents eighty years ago, incredibly tiny volumes of the Bible, Shakespeare, Burns, and many another, some of them no larger than half the size of a postage stamp; often an unabridged edition with delicately stitched bindings, originally sold in a pretty leathered case with magnifying glass complete! The earliest example in Mr. Spencer's

collection is a Bible dated 1600, so small it would not cover your finger-nail. A gentleman whose hobby it was to collect these miniature volumes introduced himself to Mr. Spencer by telling him that for his part he never needed to leave his library at home, seeing that he carried every volume of it in his handbag. And, putting the bag on the counter and opening it, he proved that he did !

But the melancholy eyes of Aubrey Beardsley are always watching me from a signed portrait as I peer among those midget tomes ; and there is Swinburne's face, framed against the opposite wall with the poet's autographed verse underneath :

> Hopes die, and their tombs are fortoken
> That the grief as the joy of them ends
> Ere time that breaks all men has broken
> The faith between friends.

The lines are copied out with the curious irregularity which is even more striking on a framed blue foolscap sheet near by, inscribed by him with a sonnet on the persecution of the Jews in Russia. I seem to be rebuked by each of these framed relics in turn, for allowing myself to be captivated by such enthralling trivialities as those hundred-year-old miniatures. Maybe they are trivial : although the thought of some vanished man or woman who took their naive pleasure from them, the thought that human smiles and tears may be traced there, is vividly mine no less than when I

look at Elia's album or Charlotte Brontë's slippers. No wonder that Mr. E. V. Lucas exclaimed on his first visit to this old bookstore: "Had I known of you earlier, Mr. Spencer, I would have taken your shop as the setting for my 'Over Bemerton's.'" Nor is the romance of it confined to yesterday. I truly believe something romantic happens to Mr. Spencer every day of his life. The world itself must spell Romance to him. Why, only a few minutes ago he was recounting for me the sequel to a purchase he had lately made at Hodgson's sale-rooms of a note-book used by Oscar Wilde during his college-days, another note-book used in the preparation of "A Florentine Tragedy," and, moreover, the typescript of part of Wilde's essay (1882) on "Art and the Handicraftsman." Soon afterwards Mr. Spencer received a visit from a stranger who brought with him twenty-seven Wilde MSS., a good proportion of them, by the way, not yet published. The name given by the visitor conveyed nothing until he explained that he was the son of Oscar Wilde.

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Climbing the stairs from that shop-parlour to this dreaming upper room comes at last the man who, through the years and by his own persistent talent, has given the whole place quality, builded its character. No need now for reluctance about turning on the lights! The spell of shadows remains, however fierce and unromantic the flare. For Mr. Spencer has yielded to his friends'

long coaxing that out of a truly surprising memory he shall recall the tale of his life in a bookshop, since first he entered into modest possession of it. To listen to him will be to listen joyfully, finding his a tale of deeper magic than that of folios and first editions only. "Consider: mines themselves are exhausted: cities perish: kingdoms are swept away, and man weeps with indignation to think that his own body is not immortal." So begins a nineteenth century's bookman's eulogy of what he called "a little body of thought," a book, which nothing short of an universal convulsion of nature can abolish, and which is enabled to live and warm us for ever. But the magic of Mr. Spencer's narrative lies as much in the fact that men as well as books have been his concern, a rugged multitude, many of whom no longer haunt these rooms except as ghosts, but all of them beautiful, being human, all of them noble, being so pitiful. No dryasdust librarian is Mr. Spencer: for is there not a lusty family round him at the week-ends, and, most glowing evidence of all, have I not seen with my own eyes a crumpled copy of "Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday" for April 29, 1899, containing his portrait and the announcement that he has been created F.O.S., and presented with the Sloper "Award of Merit"?

It is easy to say that those who in their time had been primarily men of study and the bookroom would seek their surest anchorage and shelter at 27 New Oxford Street, were they so unfortunate

Walter T. Spencer

THE AUTHOR

as to be dumped back upon the earth in this year of God's grace 1923. But we may affirm just as readily that a man of the streets, a man of men, like Dickens (too bewildered, I fear, to remain in the hurly-burly out yonder), would be at home here also. And we who are of the twentieth century itself, enabled by our long familiarity to cope with a new London, will assuredly go forth from this very human bookshop and find the outer world a little less of the breezy, goose-skinned, blue-nosed red-eyed, stony-toed, and tooth-chattering city than we believed it heretofore. Indeed, remembering what we have learnt from this Cheerybles-spirited bookman named Walter Thomas Spencer, we may even find ourselves viewing London as that most delectable of all places, where we could take a year's holiday every year ; which means a year of happy workdays if it is to be the life that hale and whole men most envy.

THOMAS MOULT.

HABLOT K. BROWNE ("PHIZ")

Watercolour illustration for "Nicholas Nickleby"

"Nicholas instructs Smike in the Art of Acting"

CHAPTER I

The Cobbler who does not Stick to his Last. London Forty Years Ago. Old Booksellers and Old Sale-rooms. My "Millionaire" Bookie and How I Began.

"This style of thing at one shilling a night does not pay for the eyebrows." So wrote Sir Frank Lockwood after an amateur attempt at the production of a play. I find my attitude to authorship is very similar, especially during recent years, when I have listened with a melancholy sense of my amateurishness to the suggestion, doubtless inspired by the kindliest motive, that I should write the story of my life among books. A full life it has been, adventurous and strange in no ordinary sense; so that when my friends, some near at hand, others in distant cities and other lands, took up the chorus of that first suggestion I began to wonder if I might not make some sort of attempt to describe the work which since June, 1883, has occupied my time, year in, year out, and all the mental and physical energy I have been privileged to command. But alas! how was it possible that I, with my unskilful pen,

should convey to others anything of what my possession of some of the greatest treasures in literature has meant to me, or my contact with distinguished authors and well-known bookmen from all parts of the world ?

That I have accumulated material sufficient for a hundred books was, of course, manifest to me, even without that friendly persuasion. My pages, crowded with facsimiles and details of the original work that great artists have accomplished, would be illuminated by the genius of others. But that I myself should have a hand in the writing of those books—even my meagre vocabulary failed me as I contemplated the prospect ! Far from the " hundred best " would they have been, and nothing has happened or will ever happen to deprive my readers (who, most like, are thoroughly alarmed by now) of the assurance that I shall not attempt to write them. And yet . . . that single, plain tale suggested by my friends ! My inclination to make at least the attempt is just a little larger than my qualification. An old customer of mine (not only his language is dead now, alas !) was fond of murmuring : *Ne sutor supra crepidam* (" Let not the shoemaker go beyond his last ") whenever he stood before the Rossetti paintings that hang in one of the rooms at my shop. He was emphatic, like Whistler (" A gentleman and a poet, Rossetti was, not a painter, what ? "), as to the direction in which lay shoemaker Dante Gabriel's last. And I doubt not that there will be readers of this book shaking

grave heads and airing their Latin before they reach the end of it.

For I have at last yielded to the finest persuasion of all, my friends' encouragement ; I meddle with what really lies outside my range. I am making a new kind of venture with the pen which, although never far from my hand, is generally employed upon correspondence and those tinted leaves that are subjected to endorsement as well as criticism. That my excursion into authorship will be received no less willingly is now my ambition, and the unwonted labour is smoother for the anticipation that others will be glad to have my record of two-score years' association with " men and books." These three little words, as Robert Louis Stevenson so brilliantly expounded, hold in themselves a world of pleasure and delight as satisfying as any we know : and surely it is a world to which even the humblest of us can make our contribution ? As for those who come to my book to criticise and remain to—criticise, well, nowadays the critic is generally a gentleman, and he is welcome to my window for his view of the procession. I suppose criticism in some form or other will always be with us. My American friends tell me, and I believe without exaggeration, that the tomahawk is not now used in arguments. Napoleon, who shot a bookseller, is no longer the terror he was. Such folios as that with which Doctor Johnson knocked down the bookseller Osborne, thundering : " Lie there, thou lump of lead ! " have to-day no value in the market. Certainly, were

they put to modern auction, they would have no bids from me.

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How times have changed since that day, forty years ago, when first I came to New Oxford Street and opened at No. 27 the bookshop which is still the hub of my existence! Another city, almost, was the London of my youth—a hard-worked youth that began in my father's picture-shop, situated on the northern side, between the Nag's Head tavern and the railway bridge along the Holloway Road. Perhaps, looking back, there is nothing that impresses me so vividly as the absence then of any rapid and easy means of transit. Those outlying parts which were fortunate enough to find themselves in the widely developing railway zone were, of course, already fairly well off: I need only turn to the advertisement section in the monthly part of "Little Dorrit" for May, 1856, thirty years earlier still, to read that trains ran every quarter-hour to and from London Bridge to the Crystal Palace, then in its heyday, and that the return fares, including admission to the great glass building, were 2s. 6d., 2s. od., and 1s. 6d. on the shilling days, or 6s. 6d., 6s. od., and 5s. 9d. on the five-shilling days, according to the class of compartment. Sixpence to the Crystal Palace from London and back, sixty-seven years ago!

But the other districts, especially those now connected by underground railways from the centre of the city, had to be content with horse-

drawn buses that made mountains out of mole-hills, splashed and dashed (to describe their progress generously) along a route that seemed little more than a linking-up of public-houses, with a change of fresh horses every now and then, for two that were death-weary and steaming in clouds from head to foot. The passenger who wanted company sat up on the box with the driver and got him talking by gift of a cigar ; but nothing could prevent stiff legs and frozen feet at the end of the journey. There was a good deal of design, one suspects, in the way they had of getting the passengers down at the Red Lion, the White Horse, or what-not. Hansom cabs within the radius were ubiquitous, and a degenerate aristocracy had nocturnal strings of these vehicles waiting for the end of the revels at Cremorne. The streets and roads were neither clean nor evenly paved, and pedestrians were plenteously bespattered with mud from the passing traffic. By night the streets were none too well illuminated, and Holywell Street, famous as a book-buyer's resort and more attractive to me in my young years than any other, was so narrow and gloomy even at its best that I can remember how difficult it was to read a volume on one of the shop boards even in the light of midday!

Yes indeed, there have been changes. Far more wonderful have they been these forty or fifty years than during the half-century preceding my boyhood, as I can so easily realise when I turn the leaves of those quaint and crudely illustrated

volumes on "Life in London" in the eighteen-twenties that divert so many of my visitors. But through all these changes and chances in this great city I am, I think, one of the few, among booksellers, at any rate, that have pitched an unmoved tent. I have observed many migrations in my time, Mr. Quaritch from Piccadilly, Mr. Walford from the Strand, Mr. Rimell from Oxford Street, Mr. Sabin from Garrick Street, Mr. Robson from Coventry Street; and in naming these gentlemen I have recalled only a minority of their number.

It is inevitable that some names which at one time were familiar on our tongues as household words are now vanished. Some day, perhaps, the historian of modern bookselling will bring them back to mind. Mr. James Westell's is among these. His establishment was situated not very distant from my own, in that part of New Oxford Street which is backed by Meux's Brewery and The Horse Shoe inn. Among Mr. Westell's customers was the Grand Old Man of the time—the late William Ewart Gladstone. Those were the days of literary Premiers. . . . Turning to "houses" as distinguished from persons, the Caxton Head has a new location; and so has the Bodley Head, although in it is one man who holds the reins there still—Mr. John Lane, for whom I have had an especial regard since the far days when he came to my father's shop in Holloway, seeking out old pictures to add to his long-famous collection of bric-a-brac. Mr. Lane must have been the first literary figure I ever encountered,

and I am glad to think that he is at this moment to be seen, a short bus-ride away from my shop, busily taking his part in the life of twentieth century art and letters. He calls on me sometimes even now, buying a drawing or two, and never going away without a sigh for his busy state and a wish that he could visit me oftener.

Another feature of the passing show has been the removal of Sotheby's to the spacious West End premises in Bond Street. Classic ground, surely, was that of their old premises in Wellington Street, to which we book-buyers so often turned our steps with anxious mental pictures of keen competitors. They stood near to the buildings from which had issued forth, under Charles Dickens's editorship, the weekly "Household Words" and "All the Year Round." Sotheby's headquarters off the Strand was world-famed, a clearing house for more precious books, priceless manuscripts, rare works of art and literary properties generally, than any building I have known. And what amazing transactions I remember there; almost crazy, some folk would call them. I have seen the door of a church pew sold on account of the great writer who once was accustomed to sit in the seats to which it gave entrance. Let such inanimate objects as this be closely associated with men of genius, and they excite in many hero-worshipping minds a curiosity and reverence which are comparable in their intensity to the emotions with which a much larger number of people approach the literary masterpieces themselves. In my time

a number of these personal relics have passed through my own hands, all of them worth recalling, had I only the leisure for it. But I shall never forget two tresses of hair, one silvery white, the other fine and beautifully golden. The least sympathetic towards the mementoes of men and women who in their various ways have made history could hardly have gazed upon those two locks of hair without a mingled sense of pathos, gaiety and tragedy. One tress had been part of the personal glory of the Princess de Lambelle ; and the other, of the ill-starred Marie Antoinette.

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The poet of "The Hound of Heaven," Francis Thompson, once confided to a friend of mine that New Oxford Street was among the places that "put a spell on him." And indeed, from the time that Montague House developed into the British Museum the neighbourhood has had the glamour of books about it. New Oxford Street itself has long been a sort of Mecca for the pilgrimage of bibliophiles and picture-hunters, autograph-collectors and antiquaries. Here, for long absorbing hours, time has no meaning and the clock ticks in neglect.

A bookish instinct, perhaps, first drew me to open my little shop in the very centre of that glamorous quarter rather than in some other part where I might not have felt half so much at home. My stock at the commencement of my enterprise was humble enough and small enough. At all events, the four storeys of rooms that now are

crowded to overflowing with books and pictures were mostly empty and hollow-sounding then, and they remained so for many a year.

As vividly as though it happened last week do I remember what and who it was that gave me my first step upwards on the ladder of good fortune. I was very shop-proud in those early times, because "Dombey and Son" in the original monthly issues had come somehow into my possession. It was, as a matter of truth, the only Dickens publication I could own to, and I gave the bundle the place of honour in my window and marked it 45s. One day in 1884, a lady entered the shop and bought it, taking the parcel with her. In less than an hour I had a second caller: no lady this time, but the "boots" of the Golden Cross Hotel!—the building that stands close to Trafalgar Square. He carried a message for me from a Mr. William Wright, who was lying ill in bed at his rooms in the hotel. The communication explained that Mr. Wright was the husband of the lady who had purchased the parts of "Dombey and Son," and he would be obliged if I would inform him by the messenger if I could sell him any further novels of Dickens in their original monthly form. Of course I could not, but I sent word that I might be able to find some for him. Again came the messenger: would Mr. Spencer accompany him to see Mr. Wright at the hotel? I consented, and found the invalid sitting up, in a state of great excitement. The wrappers and advertisements in "Dombey and Son" had a

fascination for him, judging by the way he kept examining and asking me questions about them. The result of my visit was that I came away with a commission to procure as many as possible of the Dickens " serials." I had explained that I would probably be required to purchase them before I was able to communicate with him. " Of course," he answered, " that is just what I want you to do."

It was not difficult to discover some of the more common sets, but after a time I was able to go along to Mr. Wright and inform him that I had come upon a " Pickwick," perfect and with all the points. But the present possessor had demanded £70 for it, and I was reluctant to involve Mr. Wright in such a large amount without first consulting him. " Oh, that's all right," was his answer, and he gave me an open cheque to fill in as I needed. From that time I was always in possession of an open cheque from this first important customer of mine, until I had helped him to compile an attractive Dickens collection—I had almost said that I helped him to *complete* the collection, but you can never complete your *Dickensiana*.

After that he turned to George Cruikshank, both as illustrator to the Dickens books and for the artist's own sake. When I could find nothing further in those directions for him to buy, he commissioned me to go ahead and make a collection of " extra " illustrations, those not included in the actual first editions of Dickens' works—

I had made the suggestion because I was at my wits' end to know what would satisfy him. These he required me to "inlay" for him, the actual inlaying being done in first-class style by the craftsman I myself recommended—Mr. Albert Jackson, then of Great Portland Street. Mr. Wright collected such a large number of these extra illustrations that in the end his copy of Forster's "Life" was inlayed to the extent of twelve folio volumes!

And now for the sequel, certainly a dramatic one, and good as well as sad to recall.

Often enough in my time have I been astounded to discover the nature of my customer's own profession or business; but when, a little while after our first meeting in the Golden Cross Hotel, Mr. William Wright's occupation was revealed to me, I received the shock of my life. He was one of the biggest racecourse bookmakers in Paris! Across the Channel he was known as the millionaire bookie! He never appeared on the racecourses in his own country.

Whenever he crossed over from France, always very busily—and he came quite often—there was sure to be a message commanding me to dine with him at the Golden Cross. On one or two occasions I met his two sons there also, down on a visit from either Oxford or Cambridge. The eldest son was present at the last meeting I ever had with the old gentleman: it was in 1891, I think, and we had been discussing the general increase in the price of books.

Suddenly Mr. Wright turned to his son, and said : " Well, John, I hope when I've gone you'll see properly to my books that I have taken so much care about."

" O yes, Dad," the young man answered lightly, " I shall see to the books all right. I'll very soon turn them into money."

The hush that fell on the room at those words was terrible. They had cut the old father to the heart. Young Mr. Wright realised in a moment what he had done. But his father's manner made it impossible for anyone to speak.

" Very well, my lad," said Mr. Wright, reaching with great deliberation for a pen and paper, " I won't trouble you to do that."

He wrote then and there to Sotheby's, ordering the sale of his library. Nothing I could say, no repentance his son could show, made him alter his decision. His love of books and his pride in them was so great and deep that he could not bear to think they would ever pass into the unsympathetic hands of even his own son. This was the last of his book-collecting, and I never saw him again.

CHAPTER II

Frederick Locker-Lampson and *Pride and Prejudice*. Augustine Birrell and Anthony Trollope. Kate Greenaway and Austin Dobson. The Roosevelts and some titled Book-Collectors. John Drinkwater, Hugh Walpole, and Sir Walter Scott. Sir Philip Burne-Jones and Phil May. And the Book-Collector who grew too Fat to Collect.

If the name of that first important visitor to 27 New Oxford Street did not signify very much to me when I first heard it—nor will it convey anything to the readers of my previous chapter—the next gentleman I remember to have entered the shop as a customer bore a name which I recognised immediately as that of one of the most charming authors of light society verse of his time.

He introduced himself on his first visit to me as Frederick Locker—for it was not until a year later, in 1885, that he added his second wife's name to his own and became Locker-Lampson. He possessed a famous library of Elizabethan and other rare books, and he had written "London Lyrics" and "London Rhymes," and compiled the well-known "Lyra Elegantiarum," an anthology of

"some of the best social and occasional verse" (as it was officially described) "of deceased English authors." It was as a little remembrance of his pleasant hours in my establishment that he gave me the first presentation book I ever received from anyone—his own verses, "London Lyrics," in a first edition, with frontispiece by George Cruikshank. I helped to enrich his library with many volumes, and on one occasion he asked me if I could procure for him a copy of the first edition of Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice." I assured him that if the book was anywhere in the market it would soon be his, and very shortly I alighted on a good copy. It was in boards, uncut; he hastened into London to see it, and asked me to name the cost. Fifteen pounds, I answered—a good price thirty-odd years ago. "Well, Mr. Spencer," he said with a fair imitation of a sigh, "if the book is worth it I suppose I must pay."

He handed me three five-pound notes—he always paid in notes—and then he said:

"Now, tell me frankly. Don't you think me a lunatic for giving £15 for an old three-volume novel that hasn't got a single illustration in it?"

It was plain that he had regarded me as one who believed all book-collectors to be fools, with a slight qualification so far as concerned those who sought for illustrated editions! Of course, I told him that I considered "Pride and Prejudice" worth anyone's banknotes, and he was delighted to think that he was a wise man in my estimation, and not a fool at all. When he died, ten years

later, and his library was sold, the Austen volumes realised £64. To-day it is worth another hundred pounds as well !

The Right Hon. Augustine Birrell was Locker-Lampson's son-in-law. He edited the autobiographical pages, "My Confidences," at Locker-Lampson's death, and followed it a few years ago with the authoritative "Life." It is therefore only natural that the famous politician and still more famous essayist should have been a customer of mine from the 'eighties to the present day. One of his most lasting interests has been for the writings of Anthony Trollope. Long ago he told me that he couldn't understand why Trollope wasn't read—as I knew to my cost, for I had even then acquired so many Trollope volumes that I stacked a whole roomful and could not get rid of a single one of them ! Eventually Mr. Birrell wrote an essay on the Barchester novelist in the "Fortnightly Review," and I have to thank him for that essay, because from the month of its publication I have never ceased to sell Anthony Trollope's books. Among the well-known people interested in them as collectors are Lady Tree, Lady Diana Cooper, Mr. Hugh Walpole and Mr. Michael Sadleir. The first editions have gone up in value from perhaps £40 a set to £450. What I mean when I say a "set" I don't exactly know, because here we have another of those authors who, either directly or indirectly, created a literature that is apparently inexhaustible. One or two volumes are still to be discovered. The

largest set that I ever gathered together contained 143 volumes.

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Such men as Frederick Locker-Lampson remain so vividly in my memory, so near to my thoughts after these thirty or forty years, that it would not cause me the slightest surprise if they were to walk into my shop again and pick their way among the books towards my little table as they used to do ! As I recall them I recall everything connected with them, especially those other bookmen with whom, in this or that way, they have always been associated in my mind. To think of Frederick Locker-Lampson, for example, brings up the name and gentle figure of Austin Dobson. Of course, for many years before his death in 1921 Mr. Dobson lived a retired life—an invalid's life, I think—but he was often in my shop between the years 1883 and 1890. His son, indeed, called upon me only a few weeks ago and said how often his father had spoken about me and my books.

Mr. Dobson was a very careful worker, as we might guess from his preferences among the technical forms of verse. This care was especially valuable in his compilation of catalogues : he never failed to call at my establishment to verify the books. As a collector his one favourite author was Oliver Goldsmith. He was delighted with anything touching upon that eighteenth century genius, himself so gentle-natured. Mr. Dobson's own verse-volumes—"Proverbs in Porcelain" and

HABLOT K. BROWNE ("PHIZ")

Watercolour illustration for "Barnaby Rudge"

"Vignettes in Rhyme" (his earliest publications) —are still sought after, and are able to realise two guineas each.

At the sale of the Austin Dobson library I purchased for fifty guineas a set of Kate Greenaway's drawings that had been a gift to him: and glad I was to be able to do so, for I remembered Miss Greenaway herself as one who made frequent searches through my collection for the prettily illustrated children's books of a hundred years ago. While I am on the subject of these curious old publications for the young, it might be as well to mention that more of them were published a century back than is realised. Once in association with Mr. Tuer, of the Leadenhall Press, I helped to prepare a volume entitled "Forgotten Children's Books"; and I profited by the experience.

Kate Greenaway was the pioneer of reform in children's dress, and to her more than to anyone else is due the charming style we have among the little ones to-day. But, curiously enough, she herself was the last person in the world to pay any attention to dress. She came into my shop, obviously without the least idea how plain and uninteresting she looked. It was only when she began to speak to me, and when her face lighted up, that I realised that this was the famous artist about whom John Ruskin had been rapturous. She lived at Pemberton Gardens, Holloway, when I first knew her. Later she moved over to Frognal, Hampstead, and there, I believe,

gathered round her a circle by no means of the ordinary admiring and gushing type. She liked best the folk who found faults with her drawings. Mr. Stacy Marks, R.A., once said she couldn't draw children's feet because she made them all look like tadpoles ; as a mark of her appreciation she sent him a set of her own almanacs, each inscribed by her. These, too, are now in my possession. An extraordinary demand has sprung up for the books and drawings of Kate Greenaway. I remember that her aunt, Mrs. Evans, the wife of a partner in the famous firm of Bradbury and Evans, who printed Miss Greenaway's books, used to come to me every week or fortnight with a portfolio of her niece's drawings that had been rescued out of the artist's lumber basket. And well worthy of rescue those drawings were. Other people evidently thought so, because I have sold every scrap except those I presented to my own family. Once my little daughter, aged three, now my eldest, happened to be in the shop when Mrs. Evans called, and she must have taken a great liking to the child, because on every subsequent visit she carried with her not only the usual parcel of rescued drawings for me, but a smaller parcel for my daughter—a sheaf of Kate Greenaway proofs for her to colour.

This vogue of " Greenaways," as I may call them, is greater in America than it is in our own country. Before the war I had the pleasure of many visits from Mr. Kermit Roosevelt, the American President's son, who made purchases

from time to time of first editions of Sir Walter Scott's novels. He found such evident enjoyment in wandering through my building that he vowed he would bring, as soon as she arrived in England, his sister, the famous Mrs. Alice Longworth. Instantly on her arrival Mrs. Longworth asked me to show her my Kate Greenaways. She selected eight or ten, and when I named the amount, she opened a Dolly Varden bag full of banknotes and promptly made the settlement. Mrs. Longworth's brother became a captain in the American Army during the European War. I lost sight of him for several years as a consequence. His wife and her mother called one day in 1916, both of them looking very worried, having just bidden him goodbye on his way to France. While he was on military "leave" he appeared in his uniform, a fine-looking officer and gentleman, but no less the book-lover of earlier and more peaceful days.

His brother was killed in action, but he, I am happy to say, has safely returned to New York.

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I have mentioned Lady Tree as a customer at my shop. It was Sir Philip Burne-Jones, Bart., who introduced me to her as one who might be able to procure for her the novels by Anthony Trollope that she still needed. Sir Philip himself is very fond of the old premises, and often comes in, wandering from room to room with his friends.

"I have spent much pleasant time in New Oxford Street since you were away," he writes

in one letter to me ; and he is such a man for teasing that after his signature comes a note in brackets, " autograph value, ¾d."

More than kind has Sir Philip been to me personally, although, as a man of strictest rectitude, he would not allow our friendly relation to influence him when, years ago, he resolved to burn all the inscriptions in the presentation copies and letters he had received from Oscar Wilde ! It has been his custom to winter in the south of France, and I shall never forget one dreary January morning on which my dark and fog-laden bookshop suddenly flamed up gloriously with a large spray of oranges, still on the branch, that had arrived from Sir Philip's villa.

When my eldest daughter had reached the age of eight he made a painting of her. He received the " little damsel," as he called her in his letters, at his studio every other morning for several weeks. He took especial care with the silk sash round her waist—he resolved upon its colour and purchased the exact shade himself. When the portrait was completed he made a gift of it to me ; life-size it hangs in my house, and will always hang there, as beautifully and suitably framed as only the artist himself could make it. Nor is the likeness itself any less happy : and happy it might well be, for my daughter looked forward with the greatest eagerness and pleasure to that bi-daily visit. One reason for this, as she told her mother at the time, was that Sir Philip had arranged for two intervals during each sitting. There was the

interval for music—he played tunes for her on the piano (if we must have details), and the other was referred to as the " ginger-beer interval," which explains itself.

Another famous artist used to come into my shop, but he brought with him the atmosphere of a very different world from that of Sir Philip Burne-Jones. It was Phil May, the lovable and greatly loved : he wore an extraordinary check-suit, with gaiters, and soft collars long before soft collars were a fashion. Emphasising all this was a flowing bow of glaring colours, and a fringe of hair on his forehead like those with which the coster-ladies in his remarkable drawings were adorned. He was in the shop very often, but it saddened me to see, as I could hardly help seeing, that he existed not on food so much as on Scotch whisky and soda, with his inevitable cigar.

I remember how often he became ill through this not uncommon diet among artists, until at last his doctor told him that he really must restrict himself to one cigar and one whisky a day. " But," added May, as he repeated this to me, " he forgot to say the size of 'em ! " He was so pleased at having, as he thought, poor fellow, got the better of the physician that he pulled out his magic pencil there and then and executed a drawing of himself carrying out the medical orders ! As I had inspired it, he said, he presented it to me, and I regard it as so characteristic of the big little genius that I make a point of showing it to his admirers who visit my shop.

Phil May never purchased anything, but he liked to turn things over. I think it was Sir Harry Furniss who first brought him to me, but I am not certain. May was then at the height of his "Punch" popularity and, moreover, of his fame. I had the melancholy satisfaction of being able to buy a large number of his original drawings from his widow, although, as she sent them to me through the agency of a friend, I acquired them indirectly. Phil May's drawings fetch good prices to-day, more than twenty years after his death. A screen papered with various comic sketches by him has been purchased by an American collector for an interesting figure.

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One name at least of those I have introduced into this chapter has struck a note more modern by far than that which is usually sounded at the thought of a bookshop. I might take the opportunity of adding here the names of Mr. Israel Zangwill, Mr. John Drinkwater and Mr. Hugh Walpole. Mr. Zangwill I remember often, greeting me with his finely humorous smile and phrase. Mr. Drinkwater came every week for a long time, buying volumes of Shelley and Keats. When an opportunity presented itself which seemed to him very expensive he would shake his head with great gravity and—he bought the book just the same! Mr. Walpole was drawn to my shop by the fact that I had come into possession of a portion of the original manuscript of "Count Robert of Paris." He wrote to me asking if he might be allowed to

call and examine it. At our first meeting he explained to me that he had begun his Scott collection after discovering some unpublished letters from Sir Walter in California, and I have a letter written a little later by him from his house in St. James's in which he mentions a Trollope volume, and concludes by expressing the hope that the foregatherings we had already managed to have would be "only the first of many." I ought to add that Mr. Walpole purchased the fragment of the "Count Robert" MS. for a sum running into the hundreds. Of course the only way in which enthusiasts like Mr. Drinkwater and Mr. Walpole can keep their purse immune from the bookseller is to keep away from his doorstep. This, as he has told me himself, is why Mr. Walpole has rationed those eager visits of his, and, I suspect, why Mr. Drinkwater also has been practising self-denial.

My pages will unfold in due season the names of many a writer of the generation earlier than theirs, but it is not to be expected that I can give an abundance of names belonging to the period of Mr. Drinkwater and Mr. Walpole. After all, most young writers are through economic necessity too deeply concerned in the production of their own volumes to have the appetite for collecting the books of others. It is men and women of another sphere altogether who take away with them the larger proportion of my treasures. Lord Rosebery, for example (although we must not forget that he too is an author), was for a long period one

of my visitors. He specialised on drawings and prints of his old public school, and I remember obtaining for him ten years ago a rare copy of Harwood's "Alumni Etonenses." I had the pleasure on several occasions of welcoming his daughter, Lady Sybil. Her purpose was the search for books and drawings connected with parachutes! Similarly, Lady Drogheda has made personal calls for prints of aeroplanes. Sometimes she would be accompanied by her son, Lord Moor, and I received from her a gracious invitation to the opening ceremony of the first air-craft exhibition held at the Grafton Galleries, London, it will be recalled, during the war. There it was that Lady Drogheda introduced me to Air-Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard.

Parachutes and aeroplanes! It remains only for me to name a collector of engravings and pamphlets in which balloons are the main subject. Long before aircraft was thought of, long before boy-scouts were dreamt of, Colonel Baden-Powell, as he was then, asked me to assist him in his search for what may be called Ballooniana. A quiet unassuming gentleman Sir Robert was always: you would hardly believe him to be the original begetter of the magnificent idea of scouting.

Then there has been Lord Curzon, who spent many an hour with me looking out prints and caricatures of Napoleon I., and views of India also. On one occasion I went at his invitation to his lordship's residence in Carlton House Terrace, and spent a most pleasurable time among

the numerous treasures that he showed me. I am proud to think that I have retained the patronage of these distinguished people of our own time, and I could go on through many pages, were this merely a book of reference, recounting the names that crowd into my recollection as I write. What I may do later I cannot say, but I will add only two of them now : that of Lord Leverhulme, who is a great book-buyer of the most eclectic type, and that of a lady whose name will arouse the liveliest memories in the minds of older people. I received " Violet Fane " on my premises when she was not only a famous Society novelist, but the Hon. Mrs. Singleton. A lady of great personal gifts who used to buy rare first editions of Swinburne and Rossetti, and had them bound in morocco to match the original cloth covers, she became Lady Currie, the wife of a high authority on Egypt and the Egyptians. A copy of " Violet Fane's " novel, " Denzil Place," was, I remember in 1885 worth five or six guineas.

It must not be imagined, in spite of all this pleasant reminiscence, that the element of discord has never crossed my portals. Only as a faint, quickly-dissolving breath, however : as when one of my oldest customers, old enough to know better, somehow took it into his head when he was knighted that I was raising my prices to him. At any rate, after he became Sir ——, whenever I was asked by him to quote a figure there would be sure to arrive at my shop some stranger enquiring about the same volume or print,

obviously that the prices might be compared ! Then there is the amusing case of the late Mr. A. M. Broadley, a well-known Napoleon collector, and the compiler of the authoritative catalogue of caricatures of the great general. Mr. Broadley was, physically, not merely *broadly* but toweringly and heavily fashioned. Once he endeavoured to make the ascent to my upper rooms, but as every available inch of space from cellar to attic had been utilised for storing books the width of my staircase had inevitably suffered from a shrinkage. After being jammed once or twice in the first few steps he owned that he couldn't squeeze through, and returned to the shop and attempted to sit down on one of my ordinary-sized chairs instead. In this he was no more successful than he had been at stair-climbing, whereupon he lost his temper and swore he wouldn't come again to a shop that hadn't any decent staircases, or chairs fit to sit in !

CHAPTER III

Two kinds of Bookmen. Queen Victoria's Dentist and how he made his Fortune. George Cruikshank and Richard Bentley. Captain Douglas and Doctor Truman's Old Silk Hat.

No especial power of discernment will have been needed on the reader's part to gather from my preceding pages that book collectors may roughly be divided into two classes. These different kinds have, strangely enough, little in common, despite their rubbing shoulders with one another in apparent pursuit of the same ideal—the perfect book. The average bookman, of course, is catholic, like Lord Leverhulme or Locker-Lampson, each of whom turned naturally and easily from one author to another. With the average bookman, then, this chapter has no concern. I am going to recall one or two quaint figures I have known of the William Wright type, men who conceive a passion for a particular author, and feed it in such abundance that it develops into an obsession, an exclusion, so that their whole lifetime is devoted to that one author, all the others seeming of no account whatsoever.

Charles Dickens has obsessed the acquisitive side of many a man besides my old friend the "millionaire" bookie of Paris; of more, perhaps, than any other author, which is not to be wondered at when one learns from his publishers that fifty-three years after his last words were penned there is never a day from January to December on which his writings are not quoted or referred to in one English newspaper or another. I cannot say who comes next to Dickens in inspiring obsessions in the heart of man; but few of them can be so readily justified. As I desire to retain in my old age the regard of my Borrovian friends I refrain from pronouncing in this respect on the author of "Lavengro"; but I remember receiving, more than thirty years ago, a letter wherein, after confirming a contract by which I became the owner of sundry unpublished MSS. by George Borrow, all of them in his own handwriting, a certain lady writes in superlatives about her author that are mostly unquotable ("Whole nations read what Borrow writes"); and yet they are so little due to a mood of the moment, and so much a result of lifelong regard, that I can well believe she is still writing those superlatives either here or in another world. Something of the single-minded fervour that this lady manifested in the case of George Borrow was given to another George, the artist Cruikshank, by an old and dear friend of mine, Doctor Edwin Truman, Queen Victoria's dentist.

Dr. Truman was a wealthy man. But his fortune was made by other means than in the

service of royalty. He told me the story himself. In 1851, it will be remembered, the first Atlantic cable was laid. But nothing could be found that would prevent the material of the cable from being eaten away by the sea. "You will know, before you get this, that the American telegraph line has parted again, at which most men are sorry, but very few surprised"—thus Charles Dickens to a friend in Switzerland in 1858. Then Truman suddenly bethought himself that there are no acids so powerful as those from the human stomach. Obviously the vulcanite used in the manufacture of artificial teeth would, as a resistant, meet the Cable Company's requirements, and after a little experimenting and manipulation he produced a composition that he patented and offered for the company's use. It was found to be the very thing, and he was offered £10,000 outright or a thousand a year as long as he lived.

Dr. Truman was not only a wealthy man. He was a healthy man, and though the Cable Company imagined they had made a better contract even than that of £10,000 down when he preferred to close with their offer of the annuity the advantage was his. "I've lived forty-four years at a thousand a year already," he chuckled to me long afterwards. And, as a matter of truth, he lived for fifty.

That the genius of an artist or author should be recognised during his actual lifetime is not a particularly rare thing. It is a different matter when it comes to the attitude adopted towards

genius by those who recognise it: most discoverers take it for granted. Edwin Truman, however, was not one of these. He recognised the genius of George Cruikshank in 1850 and engaged him in a lot of illustrating, taking care to purchase secretly large numbers of the books that Cruikshank had a hand in producing. He had learnt something of the artist's circumstances, and knew that he was not prospering. Cruikshank had only drawn for "Sketches by Boz" and "Oliver Twist" when he quarrelled with Dickens, and then he quarrelled with Harrison Ainsworth.

Now let me say here that in opinions less humble than mine Cruikshank was almost unrivalled for sheer genius as an illustrator: his output was monumental and prolific; always versatile, marvellous, fanciful, and powerful. Mr. Julian Moore made a bold attempt to rehabilitate Cruikshank in the eyes of the art critics in a preface he contributed to a volume called "The Three Cruikshanks," published in the spring of 1898. He had on his side John Ruskin, who thought the illustrations to Grimm's "Fairy Tales" were "unrivalled in masterfulness of touch since Rembrandt, and in some qualities of delineation unrivalled even by him." And Philip G. Hamerton said of two elves in one picture reproduced by Mr. Moore that he had not found their equal in comic etching anywhere. During a long life Cruikshank took part, actively and strenuously, in the affairs of the London of his age, bringing his

A DRAWING BY CRUIKSHANK

strong, sane mind and vigorous constitution to bear ably upon public questions. He was a stern enemy to injustice and oppression, not only where it was a matter of personal concern, but also where it concerned others. His work is of such an extensive range that Dr. Truman was not the only man who acquired fame in collecting it. There were, to name two whom I have known personally, Captain Douglas, and Mr. H. W. Bruton of Gloucester.

When the sale took place of Truman's Cruikshank collection, after the doctor's death at a ripe old age, Captain Douglas purchased a good many pamphlets and books which hitherto had been unobtainable. Among other valuables were several hundred copies of "Points of Humour," and Captain Douglas told me he intended to select the three best of these and destroy the remainder in a bonfire. I implored him not to do so; but he insisted and carried his intentions into effect. Then his health began to break down, and his eyesight threatened to fail: and although he was a rich man, who commanded the best medical advice and was able to put off the evil day by means of several very costly operations, he eventually became practically blind. It was pitiful to see him enter my shop, led by his daughter Rose. His great Cruikshank catalogue, however, was his one aim in life, and I was glad to be able to help in its completion. My name, incidentally, may be found at the foot of the title page as part publisher.

I remember many interesting sales of Cruikshankiana. I think it must have been thirty years or more since the Cruikshank drawings from the Westminster Aquarium came under the hammer at Sotheby's sale-room. A Cruikshank sale always draws a fair number of specialists, and amongst them on the occasion of that of the Aquarium drawings were a few old men who remembered the artist personally. The principal of Sotheby's, for instance, Mr. Hodge, senior, was one of these, as was also that genial and excellent critic Mr. Joseph Grego, who walked around with Mr. Hodge and talked to his heart's content of the old days when Cruikshank was a familiar figure in the Strand and Wellington Street. Mr Grego had some good reminiscences. One of them I am able to recall, because I happened to be passing as he spoke. He had, indeed, turned to include me in his audience, and " Yes," he said, " George was a wonderful man. He danced a hornpipe in my cellar on his eightieth birthday ! "

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Just as I never pass over Putney Hill without thinking of the poet Swinburne, I always recall three remarkable men as I cross St. James's Park. These are George Cruikshank, Dr. Truman, and Richard Bentley, the publisher. Cruikshank was under contract with Bentley to execute a certain quantity of drawings annually for a period of years. Bentley, evidently forgetting for the moment how easily Cruikshank had quarrelled with Dickens

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK (After HOGARTH): Noon

and Thackeray, took occasion to find fault with a piece of work, and a violent dispute ensued, during which Cruikshank vowed he would never darken Bentley's doors again. He kept his vow for many long years, and did so, moreover, without violating his contract. He would stand on the pavement outside the publisher's office and wait there with his instalment of completed work under his arm until somebody came out from Bentley's and took the parcel from him! Dr. Truman told me the sequel, and how the two men came together again. Cruikshank was his guest at the time, and artist and doctor were strolling along through St. James's Park, when who should appear in the distance but Richard Bentley, coming towards them. The two estranged men passed each other without apparent recognition, but it happened that they both looked round at the same moment. Then, impulsively, Cruikshank went back, held his hand out to Bentley and said, simply, "Twenty years is long enough." They shook hands warmly at that, and were good friends again for the remainder of their lives. The incident reminds me of the famous reconciliation between Dickens and Thackeray on the steps of the Athenaeum.

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Dr. Truman lived a life of extreme loneliness after his wife died, and he formed the habit of spending his Saturday afternoons with me, his four-wheeled carriage awaiting him outside my shop. We talked together as long as I was

disengaged, and he frankly admitted that no other bookseller in London would have tolerated him, because he never spent any money ! But although at that period he did not buy much, he often served me a very good turn by recommending me to his book-collecting friends. He became more and more eccentric as he grew older. He neglected his outward appearance so completely that his housekeeper and the other members of his household begged him again and again to purchase a new silk hat—he always wore a silk hat, and had worn the same one for untold years. Attempts were made at his home to get rid of it, but he always had the hat repaired. So many repairs were made upon it that if you examined it closely you had more difficulty in recognising the original silk than in recognising the grafted portions.

One day, however, when he was taking a bath in his house—the bath itself was of the old-fashioned marble type—he forgot to turn the water off, so that it ran over the edge and leaked through the floor. Immediately underneath was the hall, and on the hall-table lay that silk hat of his, upside down as he had placed it there. When the bath overflowed the water dripped into the hall, and, believe it or not, right into the hat ! The hat became a bucket, filling rapidly before the leak was discovered, and by that time, as the household were overjoyed to see, the silk was bulging woefully. Surely he'll not be able to wear that old thing again, they thought. But

they reckoned without their master. " Even now I've had it done up ! " he said to me as he related the adventure : and, sure enough, it was on his head !

The very last time I ever saw Dr. Truman (he died in 1900), he was still wearing the same old silk hat.

CHAPTER IV

I Launch Out as a Publisher. Cruikshank's *Handbook for Posterity.* Old Charles Hancock and how he Etched on Glass. Cruikshank and his Portraits of Himself.

When in the previous chapter I made reference to a volume entitled "The Three Cruikshanks" I did not mention that I myself had been its publisher. My undertakings in that department of literature were so droll and unique, despite their disastrous conclusions, that I desire to tell their story separately; and, as the reader's mind will still be echoing with my talk of George Cruikshank, this seems to be a timely moment for the insertion of an amusing page concerning them.

My grandfather, from whom I inherited much of my partiality for books, used to tell me so often when I was a boy how well worth doing was a thing worth doing at all, that the thought became a sort of habit with me; nor shall I regret that my activities have been dominated by it even though it led to my undoing as a publisher. For I now realise thoroughly that there is all the world's difference between the two businesses of publishing and book-dealing, akin though they appear super-

ficially to be. Whatever may be the consequence of my present excursion into authorship, certainly I was castigated severely enough on the previous occasion I strayed from my ordinary occupation ! For I produced my publications so thoroughly well, printed and bound them in such a beautiful format that I found it necessary to issue most of them at two or three guineas each, and hardly sold a copy ! The few that found a purchaser have, as a matter of fact, now returned to me, because I made a point of buying them in the sale-room at the death of their original owners. They are stored at my Shanklin house in the Isle of Wight : they are a monument of well-meaning over-efficiency, for I did not care to have them scattered about or sold as remainders in my own lifetime.

My beginnings as a publisher date back to 1896. I had been attracted by the MSS. of several books that had come casually into my hands. During the two or three years I pursued this additional occupation I published the following volumes, and, as I copy out my list, I do not regret my sponsorship of a single one of them :

Twiddle-Twaddle : A Handbook for Posterity, by George Cruikshank, about Himself and Other People. A Series of 62 " Etchings on Glass," with Descriptive Notes.—1896. (200 copies only, initialled by engraver and publisher.)

The Three Cruikshanks (the two sons, George and Robert, and their father, Isaac). A Biblio-

graphical Catalogue of over 500 works illustrated by them; compiled by Mr. F. Marchmont, and edited with an introduction by Mr. Julian Moore. 1897. (500 copies only.)

George Cruikshank's Portraits of Himself. By Mr. G. S. Layard, with more than 40 illustrations. 1897.

King Glumpus: an Interlude in One Act. By W. M. Thackeray. A Facsimile reprint of the Original Edition of 1837. With Three Illustrations. 1898.

Thackeray's Writings in "The National Standard" and "Constitutional." With Facsimiles of all the original drawings by the Author and a special Portrait from the Monumental Bust in Westminster Abbey. To which is added an Elegaic Poem (1864) by Sebastian Evans, M.A., 1899. (500 copies only.)

Unpublished Verses. By William Makepeace Thackeray. With Two Original Drawings and Facsimiles of the original Manuscripts. Twenty-five copies only. Not for sale. 1899.

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I shall never grow tired of turning the pages of Cruikshank's "Handbook for Posterity." The artist, as is well known, contemplated writing his autobiography and profusely illustrating it. He managed during the nine years intervening between his resolve and his death to complete sixty drawings, but he did practically none of the letterpress, and they stand by themselves. Somehow one feels in looking through them that the

greater part of the scheme was already accomplished, for the drawings cover every phase of his career. There is a drawing, at the beginning, of his mother aristocratically feeding the fowls in the grounds of their Hampstead home. Little Robert in petticoats is watching the proceedings, and George himself is chortling in his nurse's arms. The house in the background is that in which George was born. In the drawing which follows we have the scene of an accident. While Mrs. Cruikshank was feeding the fowls she chanced to lean for support against some ricketty pailings guarding a pond. These gave way suddenly, and the drawing shows her falling back into the water. Fortunately the milkman, to be seen issuing at the moment from the house, came straightway to her assistance and rescued her. She was, however, very ill for some time, and the accident was the cause of George's sister making an appearance in the world sooner than had been expected.

Master George, like most healthy youngsters, was often very naughty. On one occasion his father, losing all patience with him, picked him up and held him out of the window at the house in the Strand to which the family had removed in George's boyhood. "I will throw you out of window, you naughty boy," the parent is exclaiming, and we see him in the accompanying drawing, threatening to suit the action to his words. The culprit is begging hard for mercy, promising he will be a better boy for the future : and keeping his word—until the next occasion. Cruikshank

emphasises these last four words by italics. Then comes a drawing of the Cruikshank's house in Dorset Square, over which Mrs. Cruikshank presided after their removal from Duke Street. It is a tall, four-storeyed residence, one of a row, and the upper part is reserved for Isaac Cruikshank's studio and workrooms. Here George's father worked at his etchings on copper, the boys being pressed at an early age into the service of colouring the plates. In the letterpress accompanying the drawing the reader is asked to notice the perilously situated figure on the coping at the edge of the high roof. Its presence in that unusual situation is explained in the next drawing. It is the figure of young George, on one of the "next occasions" referred to in the drawing entitled "Held Out of the Window in the Strand," caught by the button-hole with a nail after he had climbed out of the attic window on to the parapet of the roof. His cries attracted the attention of persons passing in the street, and he was eventually rescued.

Another picture shows King George the Third riding in state to St. Paul's Cathedral for the purpose of returning thanks for his recovery from an illness, and his little namesake among the spectators, hoisted on his father's shoulder. Further along we see him grown up, undertaking a commission to make a sketch of Covent Garden after the Fire. As he wanders among the debris he is ordered away by one of the guards, who, finding him in no hurry to obey, proceeds to hook

him down with his bayonet. Eventually he is recognised as a privileged person and the commission allowed to proceed. Then we have George in his studio, assisting at a rehearsal of his friend William Hone's defence in his prosecution for blasphemous libel. A note under a later drawing is shrewd : " Pathos, unless well done, easily degenerates into bathos." There is a drawing entitled, " Drury Lane," although we see only a twelve-paned window, dirty and cracked in many places, and out of it peers a nightmare of faces. Having occasion to return home by a court leading out of Drury Lane Cruikshank had noticed that window, and he thereupon made his drawing of it. On enquiring at the house he found that these seven persons were all living and sleeping together in one room ! Truly the early nineteenth century was no better (in that respect) than the early twentieth.

We have Cruikshank revealing himself as a sanitary reformer ; as a fun-maker of society fashions (in a drawing wherein a lady's hair has been prepared overnight for an early morning Court function, and she has to sleep as best she can) ; as an expounder of the use of the guillotine " named after its inventor, Dr. Guillotin, and first used in 1792 "—the year in which Cruikshank was born ; and as a humanitarian, protesting against the barbarous practice of sending boys up the chimneys, naively hinting with his pencil that a long-handled, revolving brush might do the work just as well—a remarkable prophecy, by the

way, of a reform that came about after his death. He ridicules the method of lamplighting which necessitates the use of a ladder—once again suggesting the use of a long-handle, this time for the torch ; and he inserts with pride a drawing by Thackeray which the great novelist executed privately in the presentation copy to Cruikshank of "Vanity Fair."

But, above all, (and these exceed all the foregoing in their rich quaintness if not necessarily in importance), there are the drawings in which Cruikshank expounds his idea of the Universal Worship of God and his theory of the World. In effect he declares that everyone agrees with La Bruyere when he says : "Je sens qu'il y a un Dieu, et je ne sens pas qu'il n'y en ait point : cela me suffit" (I feel that there is a God, and I do not feel that there is not one : that is enough for me). While Cruikshank was making his drawings he was asked if he thought it worth his while to try and correct people's foolish notions as to the shape of the earth. "Yes, certainly," said he : "it is : I have always opposed propagating wrong ideas, and the best way of showing those people how absurd theirs are is by making drawings in accordance with their theories.

"Now here you have the earth flat," he said, making his sketch of it. "How can this be correct ? The water would run over the edge, and where would it go to ? Absurd !"

And sure enough, in the drawing the water is running over the edge ! But in the very next

pictures he makes fun of the theory that the earth is round. " Mark the railway engine hurrying off into space," he writes underneath one of them. Then a drawing later :

" Supposing tunnels were cut through the earth and ladders run through them, then a man starting feet downwards would come out feet upwards, and standing on his head ! If, however, he started feet downwards and then turned round when he got half-way and so continued, he would come out the right way up.—Q.E.D."

" Time removes all Things," he writes under another drawing that sums up the whole position as it appeared to his vigorous intellect. " Ah sir," he said in conversation, " time will sweep them all away : the 'ists and 'isms, their tall steeples, spires, and grand buildings,—time will sweep them all away."

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All the engravings in " Twiddle Twaddle : A Handbook for Posterity," were made by a special process which lends particular value to the volume. Mr. Charles Hancock, an engraver of Hither Green, invented a method of producing blocks by what was known as " Etching on Glass."

It may be of value to the reader interested in engraving if I copy out from the preface to the volume Mr. Hancock's own description of how the blocks were produced ; especially, as, so far as I am aware, although the process aroused the utmost enthusiasm in Cruikshank, it has never been adopted by later craftsmen :

" I prepare a glass plate (preferably Patent Plate) with a thin white film. The drawing is then traced on this just as on a wood block, only not reversed, the plate being laid on something black with the film side uppermost. The film is then etched away with a steel, ivory, or unsplit quill point, the lines appearing black on the white ground. This I use as my negative.

" I then prepare a polished zinc plate, with a photographic ground. On this the glass plate is super-imposed, and the whole exposed to the light. When the white film has been etched away, the photographic ground is enabled to resist the action of the corroding solution. The zinc plate is then immersed in a corroding solution, which eats away the white parts, leaving the lines of the drawing standing up. When sufficiently bitten I wash and dry, and then prepare for a second biting. Two bitings generally suffice for five subjects, but when there are large whites a third is necessary. When finished the plate is mounted on a piece of wood and is ready for the printer."

Through the agency of the late Mr. G. W. Reid, the Keeper of the prints in the British Museum, George Cruikshank was induced to make a test of it. He made a drawing, and in due course Mr. Hancock finished the block, Cruikshank being delighted and astonished with the proof that was shown to him ; but—

" Ask Mr. Hancock," he said, " to call upon me to-morrow, and bring the block, as I should like to see it, and I will send it to the nearest

printer and get some rough pulls of it while he awaits : I shall not believe it until then."

Of course the printer satisfied him, and then he said to Mr. Hancock :

" What a pity you were not alive earlier with your invention ! It would have altered the whole character of my drawings : and it is so much easier for me to draw by this method. The wood engravings, some of them are beautifully done, but they are not really in my line. Sometimes I have been scarcely able to recognise the wood engraving as my drawing ; but in this you bring me I feel certain that every line is my own. Look at the features and fingers, they are indeed splendid !—while my things that I executed on steel took me so long to etch and finish, specks to burnish out. . . ."

The consequence was that Cruikshank determined that the illustrations for his autobiography should be reproduced by Mr. Hancock's process, and it was the same engraver who was engaged by me to execute all the zinc blocks for the volume I published. Foolishly I advanced him nearly all the money, £200 or £250, I am not quite sure which, before he delivered the work. He made various excuses for the delay which ensued—a human being is seldom as ready to do a job already paid for as he would be if the remuneration were due at the completion of it—and, to cut a long story short, those blocks cost me quite £400 ! I had been obliged to engage Hancock because no one else could have done them ; not

merely because the process was his own but because he had known Cruikshank and claimed that the artist had done the drawings for him personally.

These facts, of course, I announced in my catalogue, pricing the volume at three guineas. Living at that time was one of George Cruikshank's executors, Sir Benjamin Warde Richardson, and as he possessed several proofs of certain of the blocks which Hancock claimed were his own property, Sir Benjamin endeavoured to stop the publication of "Twiddle-Twaddle." But Dr. Truman came to my assistance, and together we were able to defy the executor. After all my worries and disappointments in connection with the book it would have been only fitting were I able to record that the publication was a success. But no-one seemed to want it—at any rate, no-one paid three guineas for it.

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Nor would they pay the price I was obliged to charge, so expensive it proved with its forty plates, for a copy of "George Cruikshank's Portraits by Himself," written by George Somes Layard, an enthusiastic student of Victorian humourists. But the volume, I think I may safely say, was justified. Many black and white artists, as Mr. Layard points out, have used themselves as models from time to time, Thackeray, Leech, Keene, Caldecott and a dozen others, but none with the same determination and persistence as Cruikshank. He was by nature too bumptious to laugh at himself as Thackeray did, so that we laugh at him,

and laugh loudest when he would have expected us to be most impressed with his dignity. We are therefore asked by Mr. Layard to bear continually in mind that all these self-portraits were prompted by egotism. But they are none the less valuable for that.

When George Cruikshank was a boy the State Lottery was a lawful method of raising revenue in England, and the gambling spirit naturally reflected itself in the children. "Children's Lottery Prints" were one of the most popular forms of amusement, and the designing and etching of these sheets was perhaps Cruikshank's earliest work. One of them is reproduced in Mr. Layard's volume. For the smallest current coin a child could buy one of those sheets; they were formed to be cut into about sixteen squares with an alleged work of art on each; and when they were placed at random between the leaves of a book the possessor would offer to his young companions an opportunity of winning one (for a consideration) by inserting between any two leaves the very useful pin. The particular print reproduced is a sort of illustrated guide to the various interiors of shops—a butcher's, a baker's, and so on. We have not advanced on the structural arrangement of these shops this hundred years; they are all familiar to us to-day, except the muffin shop, which, with its hot oven next to the counter, has been replaced by the restaurant at which you buy two penn'orth of chipped potatoes and fried fish.

A great friend of the artist's was William Hone, a political thorn in the side of the Government. We have a description of how Cruikshank was employed by him to design a title-page for a collection in volume-form that Hone in 1826 decided to make of his own pamphlets. These, already published separately, had achieved an enormous popularity among the mass of the people. But Hone takes care to explain that as the pamphlets are already outdated, such republication is not intended as a revivification, but rather as a decent funeral, and concludes with " the jinglingly reminiscent line, ' I come to bury *these*, *sir*, not to raise 'em '."

Cruikshank, we learn, was very sensitive about the caricaturing of his name. To do so was his own right, and nobody else's privilege. In one plate we find him distributing its variants, Spindle-shanks, Long-shanks, Sabre-shanks, Bandy-shanks ; but when poor Seymour, Dickens' first " Pickwick " illustrator, began to use a non-de-plume, " Short-shanks," Cruikshanks was down on him in a twinkling. What he was capable of when " down " on anybody may be understood from the remark made by a contemporary : " G. C. is the only man I know moving in a respectable sphere of life who is a match for the under class of cabmen. He meets them on their own ground and fights them with their own weapons." And a clever vignette accompanies the remark, made by Cruikshank himself, who overheard it.

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK (After HOGARTH): Evening

CRUIKSHANKS AND BENTLEY

When Cruikshank quarrelled with Richard Bentley and transferred his services to Harrison Ainsworth's magazine he made a delightful drawing of himself and the editor seated at "Our Library Table." Ainsworth is leaning back in his chair while Cruikshank speaks, emphasising his remarks with uplifted fingers. This woodcut was used repeatedly at the head of the critical section of the magazine. In the end, unfortunately, editor and artist quarrelled, and the breach, unlike that with Bentley, was never healed. An indirect outcome was the commencement in 1845 of "The Table Book," a short-lived magazine of Cruikshank's own. Gilbert à Beckett was the editor, and Mark Lemon and Thackeray, as "Michael Angelo Titmarsh," were two of the contributors. A very amusing advertisement of the venture, with a headpiece by Cruikshank, appeared in "Punch"—in the advertisement pages, of course; for although Mark Lemon was for ever inviting him to draw for "Punch" Cruikshank never hesitated about refusing—"he had seen inexcusable personalities in the paper," he said; and when Lemon vowed, "We shall have you yet!" Cruikshank shouted in reply, striking one of his theatrical attitudes, "Never!" And, as Mr. Layard goes on to say, quoting from Jerrold's "Life," he kept his word.

The advertisement of "The Table Book" is couched in the form of a mock-report of a meeting at which George Cruikshank is supposed to stand for the "decided vacancy among the M.P.'s, or

Monthly Periodicals." The play upon words wears exceedingly well. The candidate makes a speech in which he announces that, "after many years' experience in drawing I have at last commenced drawing conclusions, the result of which has been to induce me to draw to a conclusion my engagements with others": he vows his determination, "like the hero of a melodrama, to 'draw and defend myself' (Hear). I propose to lay upon your tables on the first of every month, the result of my labours, in the shape of George Cruikshank's Table Book.

"A Voice: 'Which side do you mean to take in politics?'

"Mr. G. C.: 'Why, as I don't mean to go into them I suppose I must take the outside.'

"A Voice: 'How about the "Five Points"?'

"Mr. G. C. thought five points too few. He and his colleagues would endeavour to insert the greatest quantity of Points into the smallest amount of matter.

"A Voice: 'Are you an advocate for admitting articles duty free?'

"Mr. G. C. referred to his colleague for an answer to this question, and Mr. à Beckett avowed that they intended encouraging the importation of all articles of value, from whatever quarter they might come. Very heavy articles, which inflicted a severe tax on the literary consumer, they thought ought not to be admitted on any terms. Mr. G. C. added that there would be a great

many plates, which it would be his object to fill with as many good things as possible."

In " The Triumph of Cupid," a plate issued in " The Table Book," we have three portraits of the artist. One of these three is serious and deliberate, and another is a grotesque image drawing a caricature portrait of himself. The whole design, with its numerous figures, is an exquisite example of Cruikshank's draughtsmanship ; and so is his drawing of the " Total Abstainers " meeting in Sadlers Wells Theatre. Here we see him welcoming on the stage the people who desired to sign the pledge ! When " Punch " goodnaturedly rallied him on his temperance eccentricities he declared that he " had a great mind to go down to Fleet Street and ' knock the old rascal's head about '."

The quaint old-time coffee-house atmosphere of the volume infects Mr. Layard himself here and there, and no wonder. In dealing with an etching of doubtful date he suggests that we take the safe course suggested by P. G. Hamerton, and assume that the work was produced between 1792, when the artist came into the world, and 1878, when he went out of it ! A plate much sought after by the collector is that designed for the cover of a collection of comic songs, " La Bagetelle," with Cruikshank in the centre, hat in hand, by the side of G. Cooke, the composer, who is playing the flageolet. The themes of the comic songs, alas, are no longer comic. In the first a gentleman is pointing out to a pompous

stranger that his coat tail is on fire. In the second a poor doctor walks while his rivals " in carriages roll." In the third a certain Teddy Ross makes " a fine stroke at billiards," the table cloth being in a woeful state as a consequence. And in the fourth Dr. Swift stands non-plussed by a farmer's retort that he would look quite as black in the face as the mare, *if he had looked as long through a halter*.

Then come several plates from what for Cruikshank must have been a very grim period. One, entitled " Interior view of the House of God," is a biting satire upon Carpenter's Meeting House, in the Kennington Road, next to the Elephant and Castle. The devil is keeping time with a red-hot poker, while Carpenter thunders forth from the pulpit, taking a suggestive verse from the Bible as his text : evidently to the satisfaction of the congregation, among whom are George and Robert Cruikshank and William Hone. A board announces for sale, " Tickets, either to the pews, or to heaven, at 3s. 6d. each." Another plate is of great rarity, for " even Dr. Truman's great collection is wanting it." It is a coloured etching called " The Brown Jug," to three verses in type. The doggerel, a variant on " We are the clay ; Thou art the potter," is unique enough in its grisly nature for me to reproduce here :

" Dear Tom, this brown jug that now foams with mild ale,
Out of which I now drink to sweet Kate of the vale,

Was once Toby Philpot, a thirsty old soul,
As e'er cracked a bottle or fathomed a bowl :
In boozing about 'twas his pride to excel,
And amongst jolly topers he bore off the bell.

" It chanc'd as in dog-days he sat at his ease,
In his flow'r-woven arbour as gay as you please,
With a friend and a pipe, puffing sorrow away,
And with honest old stingo was soaking his clay.
His breath doors of life, on a sudden were shut,
And he died full as big as a Dorchester butt.

" His body when long in the ground it had lain,
And time unto clay had dissolved it again,
A potter found him out in his covert so snug,
And with part of fat Toby he formed this brown
jug.
Now sacred to friendship, to mirth, and mild ale,
So here's to my lovely, sweet Kate of the vale."

Of course the drawing gives us poor Toby in all his fatness.

. . . . . .

Of other plates in Mr. Layard's volume I need in this place make little comment. One was selected for its sidelights on the artist's period ; another for its charm—particularly in the feathery delicacy of the figure in the centre—a quality that I am always reminded of in Cruikshank as I look at a drawing by the late Claude Shepperson of " Punch"; and a third is a remarkable broadsheet called " Coriolanus addressing the Plebeians," representing George IV. in Roman

dress confronting the democrats. This drawing must be accounted a triumph for the artist both as draughtsman and social historian. Well-known figures of the period are introduced among the crowd : Arthur Thistlewood, the leading spirit of the Cato Street conspiracy, for which he was hanged three months after the plate was published, is on the left of Richard Carlile, the atheistical bookseller, who became devout, and is shrinking aside with his foot on " The Age of Reason." Next to Carlile is William Cobbett, stout and threatening, with two large thigh-bones in his hands, probably intended to represent those of Thomas Paine, whose remains he had brought to England the year before. Leaning on Cobbett's shoulder is " Crater " Hunt, who with his brother Leigh had been imprisoned for an article on the Prince Regent in the " Examiner." William Hone is at the right corner, bearing a club inscribed " Man in the Moon—House that Jack Built." And Cruikshank himself is immediately behind, wearing, like the rest, the red hat of the revolutionary, and carrying a tricolour sheet marked " Caricature." The value of this plate, curiously enough, as Mr. Layard informs us, is greater if it be the " penny plain " than the " twopenny coloured."

One final glimpse of Cruikshank, and that, suitably enough, as a humorist. Whenever he spied a piece of orange peel he felt bound, in his responsibility, to kick it off the pavement. This he has represented himself as doing, to the

amusement of the old wife who keeps the orange stall, and who, in reply to the exclamation of a passer-by, " Look at that chap, Judy, kicking at the orange peel," shakes her head sadly ; " Ah sure, poor young gent! He's not right in his mind,—can't be." We could not wish for a more illuminating commentary than this pencil-sketch on the great advance during the past hundred years in the consideration shown between man and man.

CHAPTER V

Thackerayana. Lady Ritchie and a Famous Publisher. How I nearly acquired the MS. of *Jane Eyre*—and why I missed it. Some Thackeray Lovers and His Early Writings.

No less than in the case of George Cruikshank my association as a publisher with William Makepeace Thackeray had its personal aspects. I knew his daughter, Lady Ritchie, for many years, and my recollection of our first introduction will always give me pleasure. I had acquired at Hodgson's in Chancery Lane a bundle of presentation volumes, all of which bore her name, and as she was still living—ten years, indeed, were to elapse before she died—I suspected that they were stolen, and gave as much publicity as I could to my acquisition in the hope that she would become cognisant of it. And, sure enough, a letter came from her in which she expressed her desire to regain their possession, and asking me what was the lowest profit I would take for them. I immediately sent a messenger with the books to her house, adding a note to say that I would accept nothing beyond the amount, £2 15s. 0d., which I had paid at Hodgson's myself. She sent

MRS. PERKINS'S BALL

Watercolour drawing by W. M. Thackeray

A label on the back of the original drawing reads: "This drawing was sold, with others from the same work, at Robinson's in Bond Street. It belonged to F. Chapman [of Chapman & Hall]. He

the money together with a delightful token of her appreciation—a sketch of a girl by her father, and one of the gold nibs with which his sketches had been made.

In the year 1899 I purchased some unpublished verses by Thackeray. I wrote to Lady Ritchie requesting permission to publish them, and she, of course, referred me to her father's publishers, the firm of Smith, Elder & Company. I called at their offices in Waterloo Place by appointment, and was introduced to the senior partner, Mr. George Smith. We had an interesting quarter of an hour, talking the old inexhaustible talk of men and books, and by that time he must have decided that I was a worthy man, for he gave me permission to print twenty-five copies ; which I did, and shall refer to their contents later in this chapter. After that we turned from generalities to the subject of book values, and suddenly he said :

" What would you give me, Mr. Spencer, for the MS. of 'Jane Eyre' ? "

I could only reply that I would consider it an honour if he would permit me to have a glimpse of the manuscript, and he sent for it out of the firm's private strong-room. Then I said :

" Mr. Smith, I will give you a thousand pounds at once."

He was taken aback. He asked if I really meant such a sum. I assured him I did, and was in great hopes that he would consent to the bargain. He looked thoughtful for a moment, and then shook his head.

" No, I really cannot part with it. A good deal else, but not that, Mr. Spencer, not that."

Mr. Reginald Smith, the junior partner, was seated before his desk at the other end of the room while this conversation was going on, and he heard all that we had spoken. I had a momentary hope that he might put in a word for me, but he said nothing. Our conversation drifted to Mr. Smith's fortune, and how he made it. He purchased Apollinaris Water shares when they were worth no more than sixpence. Suddenly one day " Punch " came out with a joke in which much play was made on the name—someone was made to say : " We'll have some Polly and Scotch." The phrase at once caught on with the whisky-drinking public, " and now," Mr. Smith confided, " I am worth over half a million." Some years later I purchased at Christie's some original drawings by " Phiz " for Anthony Trollope's " Can You Forgive Her?" Mr. Reginald Smith, who had become the senior of the firm, sent one of his clerks to my shop to know if he might call and examine them. I offered to deliver them to his office to save him the trouble, but he preferred to come with his wife. I took him upstairs, and he bought the drawings. He was very interested in my collection, and afterwards made several visits. After his melancholy death only a few years ago, an event that brought about the merging of the old firm with that of John Murray, I enquired one day from Mrs. Reginald Smith about the MS. of " Jane Eyre." Somehow I felt quite relieved

to hear her say that it would never be in the market, as she intended to present it to the British Museum.

. . . . . .

The mortal life of William Makepeace Thackeray was not a long one—he was born in 1811 at Calcutta and died in 1863 at Kensington, London—but his literary output was surprisingly large. " Vanity Fair " itself is a big achievement merely as a task, as anyone may discover by transcribing a few pages. Even at a date so long after his death as 1910-1911, when many of the manuscripts and drawings I formerly owned had passed out of my possession, I was able to help Mr. Lewis Melville in many directions with his biography of Thackeray, published by Mr. John Lane in 1910: and I loaned upwards of fifty specimens of the novelist's work for exhibition at the Old Charterhouse. This exhibition, it will be remembered, was opened by the Earl of Rosebery for the Titmarsh Club, and the Exhibition Committee included Dr. W. L. Courtney, Mr. Walter Jerrold, Mr. Lewis Melville, the Master of Charterhouse (Rev. Gerald S. Davies) and Mr. Reginald Smith.

Among the Thackeray Treasures lent by me for the exhibition were a scrap of the original MS. of " The Virginians " ; several of Thackeray's water-colour and pen-and-ink drawings; an autograph visiting card (" Please admit Mr. Hayns to my lecture—W. M. Thackeray ") ; a copy of the " Christmas Books " 1857, with the autograph

" W. M. Thackeray " on the title page, under the printed name, " M. A. Titmarsh " ; many first editions, several in their original monthly parts ; and a number of the author's letters. " I write at the rate of five thousand letters a year," said Thackeray in 1853, and one can well believe it. Another letter it was possible for me to lend had been written by Robert Browning to Thackeray from Rome in 1860, evidently in reply to a request for contributions to the " Cornhill Magazine," and suggesting that Mrs. Browning might be able to send something.

The last time I ever saw Lady Richmond Ritchie, herself a writer of distinction, was at the Charterhouse on that same occasion. Her gracious presence was a link in the great pageant of Victorian literature, as it were a page from " Cranford," an episode in " Our Village." Such saintly calm as hers, lingering from the days of lovely youthtime and its fragrance and inspiration, held everyone's love and veneration at that Exhibition, concerned though most of us had been until we stepped over the Charterhouse threshold with the problems and stress of everyday existence. Following immediately upon Lord Rosebery's address came our inspection of the exhibition and a wander-tour among the historical rooms and quadrangles of Colonel Newcome's old home, which put one in mind of Oxford ; and mid-London went out of one's mind entirely.

Whatever I write in this book about Thackeray and the other great authors is written always with

the thought that my own children will read it: therefore do I recall my conviction that all great men are greater if they have sympathy and love for the little ones growing up around them. Thackeray and Dickens, whose fame has extended through my own days and will extend beyond my children's time not merely undiminished but increased, never lost their kindly heart for young people. Who that has once read it can ever forget the description by "Boz" of his visit to a workhouse, where he saw much squalor and misfortune, much to lament which in the happier circumstance of our own day has fortunately passed away. Men as a rule become so engrossed with the actualities of grown-up existence that they forget to reach downward either to flowers or babies. Not so those two great novelists: read but one passage in which Dickens is engrossed with the little ones and you have a larger understanding of his mind than his novels as a whole can give you. Follow him, as "Boz," into that London workhouse:

"There were many babies here, and more than one handsome young mother. There were ugly young mothers also, and sullen young mothers, and callous young mothers. But the babies had not appropriated to themselves any bad expression yet, and might have been, for anything that appeared to the contrary in their soft faces, Princes Imperial, and Princesses Royal. I had the pleasure of giving a poetical commission to the baker's man to make a cake with all despatch and

toss it into the oven for one red-headed young pauper and myself, and felt so much the better for it. Without that refreshment I doubt if I should have been in a condition for the ' Refractories ' towards whom my quaint little Matron—for whose adaptation to her office I had by this time conceived a genuine respect—drew me next, and marshalled me the way that I was going."

Follow me now with Thackeray for a moment, not to the bedside of a pauper, although it is to a couch of sickness and need, where a little girl lies surrounded by comforts but is unable to join her merry companions. However ease-giving the sofa or bright the room, there is on the other side of the window always sunlight, always a meadow of flowers ; and a longing takes the little girl's heart for the power to run about like other children who, poor as well as rich, find in it their happiness. It is in the copy of Locker-Lampson's poems which their author once gave to me that I meet with this Thackeray, this grown-up scholar of Charterhouse and Cambridge, reading " The Rose and the Ring " to the tiny daughter of an American sculptor at Rome :

" It is nine years ago since he wrought it
Where reedy old Tiber is King,
And chapter by chapter he brought it—
And read her ' The Rose and the Ring '."

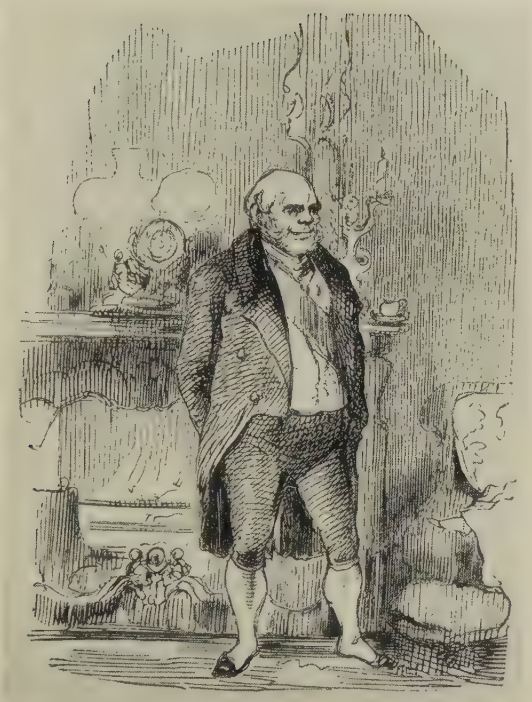
When Thackeray died Frederick Locker laid his little poem at the shrine, and in that and

" Dicky " Doyle's pretty little picture we have a notable tribute by a poet and an artist to their dead comrade's love of childhood.

Mr. J. T. Fields, of Boston, by whom Thackeray was received when he first visited America, has written in his " Yesterdays with Authors " many pleasant and sympathetic reminiscences of Thackeray, Dickens and other authors of their time. Knowing as I do that Mr. Fields has been a busy business man all his life I, as a reader, feel grateful to him for the records he has so entertainingly set down. His book will always be a pleasure to me, for he is one of the pioneers of literary intercourse between two great English-speaking countries. In Thackeray's day an author's visit to America was an epoch-making event. A great banquet, under the presidency of the Earl of Lytton, was given to Charles Dickens on the eve of one of his departures, and many were the notable men, including Lord Tennyson, who assembled to speed the voyager. Nowadays, as Mr. Walter de la Mare or Mr. W. B. Yeats would tell us, there are no public farewells, and the journey is neither so long nor so extraordinary. But there is the same significance attached to it. When I think of the vast continent beyond us, " The Republic of the West," as John Bright so lovingly called it, made a second England by men of our own countryside who took little from us when they sailed in the " Mayflower " and might have taken more, I cannot begrudge to them a " Blue Boy." For in

them is the genius of the English race : it is their inheritance and they are showing us how to value it. In this spirit, and as an inhabitant of the old country than whom none is more loyal, I welcome those American friends who follow to England on the trail of their honoured countryman James T. Fields, who thus ends his reminiscences of one of his most famous friends : " Thackeray was found dead in his bed one Christmas morning, and he probably died without pain. His mother and daughters were sleeping under the same roof when he passed away above. . . . There had been years of sorrow, years of labour, years of pain, in that exhausted life. It was on his happiest Christmas morning that he heard the Voice calling him homeward to unbroken rest."

The author of " Vanity Fair " had another friend in Miss Perry, the daughter of the editor of the " Morning Chronicle," to which Lord Byron contributed, and her little blue-covered pamphlet, " Reminiscences of a London Drawing Room," contains many allusions to Thackeray. This book has long been a rarity in Thackerayana. Miss Perry was once sketched as a Shepherdess by her friend, with a dog frisking to the notes of a pipe played by a courtier, in the manner of a pastoral by Watteau. Pan peeping over the laurels completed the charming drawing, which was exhibited at the Charterhouse Exhibition. Yet another friend was Mr. J. F. Boyes, who remembered Thackeray at both school and



THE SUPPRESSED WOODCUT IN "VANITY FAIR"

This drawing by Thackeray, representing the Marquis of Steyne, appeared on p. 336 of the earliest copies of the first edition of *Vanity Fair*. On account of its likeness to the Marquis of Hertford the drawing was considered offensive and suppressed

'Varsity. Boyes was himself an author, but he delighted (as wise men do) in other men's books more than in his own. He compiled a volume called "Life and Books," full of wisdom and genial understanding, and the work of a scholar. Among his drawings of Thackeray he treasured most a pictorial interpretation of "Pallida mors aeques pulsat pede pauperum tabernas regumque turres." The schooldays linger on, and boys we knew come up as men; and fame we courted seems so much work: and the world so little, and so brief, but ever in our faces we seek the breath of dawn, and think of one who thus could write, after the storm:

"And when—its force expended,
The harmless storm was ended,
And as the sunshine splendid
Came blushing o'er the sea—
I thought as day was breaking,
My little girls were waking
And smiling, and making
A prayer at home for me."

William Makepeace Thackeray desired nothing so wistfully as to be regarded as a poet.

The little brochure of his unpublished verses which, with reproductions of two original drawings and facsimiles of the manuscripts, I was able to compile by Lady Ritchie's and Mr. George Smith's permission in June 1899, reveals exactly in what respects that desire of Thackeray to be known for his poetry was fulfilled or failed to be

fulfilled. The first of the pieces is in an unexpected mood :

" Sweet did she smile and graceful did she move
My blue eyed Adela, my first dear love !
I thought that day my life I would resign
When Addy took another name than mine.
Go to ! I live my folly to disown,
And my dear Adela weighs eighteen stone."

The next piece, entitled " Stranger— " and addressed at the head " Reform Club, W."—is an unfinished piece whose evident purpose was to describe Syra, " an isle of no surpassing size but excellent of worth":

" In flocks and kine, in corn and vine
Abundant is its soil :
There never famine makes to pine
No maladies to woe consign
The dwellers of the soil."

There it breaks off. Another fragment contains the passage :

" One of those Angels lured by woman's love
And banished evermore from heaven above
To pine in earthly prison."

And the concluding piece, entitled " The Past—Looking Back !" is interesting enough and brief enough to copy in full :

" I'm free from the city's noises now,
And the city cares that bound me ;
I chase the shadows off my brow
'Mid the rural scenes around me.

Alone in the evening's shadow-light
In the deepening gloom and sadness,
I roam the paths of past delight,
Of youth's wild dream of gladness.

I see that panorama vast
That to these eyes is giving—
The joyous scenes of that dead past
Still in my bosom living.

I call those thoughts and mem'ries back
That stern-faced toil has banish'd
And wander o'er the beaten track
Of happy days long vanish'd !"

. . . . . .

In the list given at a previous point in my narrative of the books issued by me during my venture as a publisher I have included one entitled " King Glumpus." When I first encountered this book only two or three copies appeared to be in existence. I considered it a pity that collectors should be deprived of the opportunity to complete their sets of Thackeray's published works, and I therefore reproduced this volume in facsimile. It cost a deal of money, and much trouble. But I took care that it should be recognisable as a reproduction, lest in the future someone might attempt to pass it off as the original issue. I also published a volume entitled " Thackeray's Writings in the ' National Standard ' and ' Constitutional '." This was a collection never previously attempted, not even by the Americans, who love him as well as and often better than his

compatriots do ; a collection which I considered worth making because in such early writings we have the essential Thackeray more vividly and intimately revealed than even in the masterpieces of his maturity.

For anyone to attempt to obtain all these writings in their original form would be most difficult, entailing great expense and endless labour : while the outcome would be disappointing ; and, moreover, unsightly as a collection, there being a total absence of uniformity in their appearance. They were originally printed in folio and quarto journals, as " column matter " ; but I arranged that for their presentation in the volume they should be divested of everything extraneous, in a shape which I believed would be found much more agreeable to the eye. Nor was any effort spared to give an exact reproduction of the text, *verbatim et literatim*, and a precise facsimile of each illustration introduced. I dedicated the volume to Mr. S. Causley, an authority upon the subject of Thackeray's life and writings, as a slight token of thankfulness for the valuable information he so readily gave me.

" The National Standard " was a weekly journal of " Literature, Science, Music, Theatricals and the Fine Arts," published by Thomas Hurst, at 65 St. Paul's Church Yard, London. The first number was issued on January 5th, 1833. In the eighteenth number appeared Thackeray's first contribution, a woodcut of Louis Philippe, " the

great Roi des François": and verses with explanatory satire :

" He stands in Paris as you see him before ye,
Little more than a snob—There's an end of the story."

With the next issue, on Saturday, May 11th, 1833, Thackeray became editor. His inaugural address was brave and blithe. When I issued the collection I had hesitation in attributing this address to Thackeray, but on re-reading it I have none. " We intend to be as free as the air," he wrote : " the world of books is all before us where to choose our course. Others boast that they are perfectly independent of all considerations extraneous to the sheet in which they write, but none that we know of reduce that boast to practice : we therefore boast not at all. We promise nothing, and, if our readers expect nothing more, they will assuredly not be disappointed.

" They must be a little patient, however, for a while. We cannot run a race with our elder rivals, who, in consequence of their age,—strange as it may seem to pedestrians, must beat their juniors in swiftness." With that he decides to drop metaphor, and explains frankly that the paper is not sufficiently in favour yet with those magnates of literature, the publishers, to get what in the trade is called " early review copies " : and therefore it is not in their power to review a book before it is published. He does not believe that to be a hardship, however : the critics of journals

so patronised " are as much the property of the booksellers as the books themselves, and the oracles speak by the inspiration of those who own them."

He concludes with a story well calculated to put his readers in a good humour with himself and the journal. " One of the results of the manner in which our poor-laws are administered is a system of forced marriages. A parish, anxious to get rid of a young woman who is pressing on its resources, often advances her a portion, if she can find a husband. The sum given is not very magnificent, seldom amounting to more than five pounds.

" A very pretty girl in a parish of which we, like Cervantes, in the beginning of Don Quixote, do not choose to recollect the name, obtained one of these splendid dowries, and was married accordingly. A lady who patronized the bride shortly after the marriage saw the bridegroom, who by no means equalled Adonis in beauty.

" ' Good Heavens !' said she to the girl, ' how could you marry such a fright as that ?'

" ' Why ma'am,' was the reply, ' he certainly is not very handsome, but what sort of a husband can one expect for five pounds ?' "

And he leaves the moral to the readers, as well as its application to the " National Standard." But he vows to prove to them, nevertheless, that the sort of paper they will be given in exchange for twopence is not to be despised. If it was not exactly despised the journal was given the cold

shoulder : for with the fifty-sixth weekly number it came to an end, on February 1st, 1834. Poor Thackeray put a great deal into it. Drawings, satires, verse and criticism : every page was illumined with something from his pen. There is an amusing ditty sung by a doleful young man who was rash enough to fall in love with a maid "as bright as snow": and the refrain to each verse runs :

> "If you would know, go there and see,
> If you won't go, then credit me :
> 'Twas at the back
> Of the Tabernac,
> In Tottenham Court Road."

The young man, sang Thackeray, wrote a love-letter beginning "Sweet Star": but—

> "I served the daughter with verse and wit
> And the father served me with a writ,
> An exchange I don't admire :
> So here in iron bars I sit
> In quod securely stowed,
> Being captivated by a she
> Whose papa captivated me :
> All at the back
> Of the Tabernac,
> In Tottenham Court Road."

A criticism of the Covent Garden opera begins : "One night last week we stretched ourselves along three empty benches to hear the horrid parody—the disgusting burlesque which goes under the

name of 'Zauberflötte.' We must do justice to Messrs. Dobler and Hertz, as well as to Madame Schröeder, by saying that they sustained their parts most ably: but for the rest—for the company of hideous screech-owls, which Bunn (the lessee) or some other gentleman of equally good taste, has collected at Covent Garden—the quaverings of a cracked ballad-singer, the screams of Miss Pearson herself, are melody to the howls of these high-Dutch monsters." The "Old Vic" (then the Coburg Theatre) is announced to reopen on the 1st July. "The theatre is the very best in the metropolis, but the neighbourhood is unfortunately one of the worst. The new proprietors must calculate, therefore, upon drawing their audiences from a distance: they will have also to struggle against the evil reputation into which the house has lately fallen through the mountebank tricks of its late manager."

In a serial story parodying the periodical fiction of the time he introduces a scandalous monk, and here is one of the verses he is reported to have sung instead of chanting a hymn:

"My pulpit is an alehouse bench,
Whereon I sit so jolly:
A smiling rosy country wench
My saint and patron holy.
I kiss her cheek so red and sleek,
I press her ringlets wavy,
And in her willing ear I speak
A most religious ave."

"The Devil's Wager," as the story is called, was afterwards printed in Thackeray's "Paris Sketch Book." But Thackeray did not have much further opportunity just then for that jovial sort of literature; only a number or two more of the "National Standard" appeared, and he made his reappearance as foreign correspondent, residing in Paris, of "The Constitutional and Public Ledger." This is the paper in which the principal part of Thackeray's inheritance was swallowed up. He was part-proprietor; and the last issue appeared on the 1st July, 1837. The issues between June 22nd and July 1st (inclusive) had each column heavily bordered with mourning-leads, consequent on the death of King William IV. But a note on July 1st adds a grim touch of Thackerayan humour:

"The black margin is this day worn with a double significance."

Thackeray's writings on French politics of ninety years back are brilliant. They can be read to-day with an interest as keen as that which their readers showed on their appearance from day to day. His pen has something of its later incisiveness. "Justice," he writes with bitter satire; "what a comfort it is to us poor common men to live under the guardianship of a protector like this. He has no aristocratic tastes and propensities, he lives and labours for us only: he has no fashionable hankering after the society of great people: he will chop you off the head of a plough-boy for stealing a sheep, but if a prince

filches a kingdom, or murders half a million men, he passes by his Royal Highness with the utmost contempt. Justice, heaven be praised! is our privilege, it is made only for the people, not for their masters." Later he tells the story of how a plot against the King's life was discovered and set all France in an uproar, and how, out of what seemed a tremendous conspiracy by a secret society, came the information at last that "out of this mountain of murder and crime have crept *two mice*." The whole plot was hatched by two silly apprentices—"two regicide ragamuffins who leave their peg-top and marbles, to meditate assassination and become the heroes in 'strange stories of the death of Kings'."

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Finally, and perhaps the most thrilling and moving page in the whole collection, comes the description of a piece of military injustice that has plainly set Thackeray afire with moral indignation. It is the story of a private soldier, a man named John Louis Marin condemned in 1833 to five years' imprisonment and hard labour for desertion.

Marin was placed in a military prison so odious to the convicts that they had sought under any circumstances to be transferred to another place of confinement. They actually committed crimes and misdemeanours which, by increasing their punishment caused also their removal. But when Marin struck one of his comrades he was only condemned to a year's further imprisonment in

the same place. He must needs, therefore, violently kick the surgeon who attended the prison. At his trial he declared he had no animosity against the surgeon, and explained frankly why he had committed the assault. Yet he was condemned to death, for striking a superior officer !

It was generally hoped that the appeal made for Marin after his sentence would be listened to. He was a man of quiet conduct and orderly laborious habits. Moreover, a man in the same town, guilty of murder with the foulest premeditation (having stoned to death his own brother who was screaming in vain for mercy), had received a remission of his sentence and been permitted to live.

" But poor Marin," wrote Thackeray, " was in a military prison where insubordination was very prevalent and dangerous, and his appeal was rejected. On the day appointed for his execution, the 30th of December (1837), he was told to prepare immediately, and was marched a quarter of a league to the spot where he was to die. The people of the town flocked to the spot, and the *cortege* was very soon seen to arrive.

" Marin walked between two ranks of soldiers, a priest embracing him during the whole march : he was perfectly calm and tranquil, and absolutely gave support to the clergyman, who was tottering and weeping by his side. When they arrived at the cathedral door, the condemned man knelt down and prayed for a few moments, and then marched on with a quicker step.

" Arrived on the ground, and saluting the troops assembled, he quietly took the station pointed out to him ; he asked permission to command the fire himself, but this was denied him. He then knelt down and heard his sentence read. When the Captain read the words ' in the King's name,' Marin took off his cap and bowed. During this time the Abbé Courcelles was on his knees in the snow, praying fervently by the side of the condemned man. When the sentence was read, Marin rose and threw himself into the arms of the clergyman and kissed him.

" At the signal ' Make ready ! ' Marin raised his hand—the next moment he fell dead, with his face towards the ground.

" The troops, and fifty of his fellow convicts, were then marched round the mutilated body ; the people then retired from the spectacle, and you would not have known that anything had happened, but for a few idle boys gathered round the bloody spot where the poor man fell."

I think that the graphic simplicity of the foregoing description, followed by an outburst against not merely French notions of justice but against his own England, " that still continues its elegant little *fetes* in the front of the Old Bailey," justified of itself my publication of that volume of *Thackerayana* twenty-three years ago, even though Thackeray's greatest admirers did not appear to want it.

CHAPTER VI

My Friends across the Atlantic. Henry Heinz, the Pickle-maker, and Robert Hoe of the Printing Press. A Millionaire or Two. And the Dickens Museum in the Australian Bush.

It must not be supposed from the welcome I gave to American collectors a few pages ago that I am indifferent to the gradual break-up of private libraries in this country and the disappearance to other lands of manuscripts and books which are priceless and irreplaceable. There is no greater satisfaction I can experience than to know that this treasure or that treasure has found an abiding place in some English home or institution, and yet I cannot begrudge such acquisitions to American bookbuyers, so enthusiastic are they and reverent towards our literature and art. Often during a transaction I feel how glad I am that one or another gentleman should come into possession of the book he has sought for, and yet how much more glad I would be were his library installed somewhere on this side the Atlantic!

My relations with bookmen from the United States, always pleasurable to look back upon,

began almost with my own beginning in New Oxford Street. There was the American bookseller who fitted a gag over his nose and mouth every time he entered my shop, to keep the dust out of his lungs! From this fact it is easy to deduce that his business never brought him fame or fortune. He was a young Yale scholar, as a matter of fact, just commencing in the book world with five hundred dollars as his capital! I sold him several Scott first editions—they were "cut," but he didn't mind that. He loved Scott too much, he told me! He called at the shop every morning for two weeks. When his business failed, as it was bound to do, he wrote to tell me that he had nevertheless gained a good deal of pleasure out of it.

Thirty years ago the familiar "sixpenny box" was to be seen outside my shop, and among the old books collected there were five volumes of "St. Paul's Magazine," containing some excellent stories by Anthony Trollope. A gentleman came along and purchased them, opening a talk on Dickens as he settled the bill. I led him downstairs and showed him, in a cupboard, four or five periodicals of the Dickens novels, "Nickelas Nickelbery," "Mister Humfries'Clock," and so on. I explained that they were the kind of periodical which made Dickens himself so angry and express his feelings so strongly in "Nicholas Nickleby" itself. These spurious works were rarer than such books generally are—for the parodist we have always had with us—and though normally

they were not worth a shilling each, their market price at the time was seven guineas apiece. Mr. visitor, after being assured that this was the proper commercial value, took out a roll of banknotes and paid me for the lot.

" My name," he said, " is John Wanamaker. You may have heard of my stores in New York and Philadelphia." And indeed I had, and of Mr. Wanamaker too. He had been the post-master-general of the United States of America, and his great emporia were as vast as Selfridge's. He added that he was thinking of opening a branch for rare books. And that first purchase at my shop was really the beginning of it, and the beginning also of an association between us which lasted until his death early in the present year.

There was always plenty of room for speculation about my American visitors until the moment arrived—and sometimes it was long deferred—when I was allowed to know their names. I remember a tall dark gentleman entering my shop and enquiring the cost of a volume of Swinburne's poems that he had seen in my window—" Locrine : A Tragedy."

" Eight shillings, sir," I answered.

" Is it a first edition ?"

" Yes, sir."

" Then I'll take it."

The usual ceremony, this dialogue represents, just as it stands. But as we settled the transaction I directed his attention to a copy of " Undergraduate Papers " that was lying on my table.

"Undergraduate Papers," of course, was Swinburne's first publication, for he edited them and contributed his first poem there, as a schoolboy near Cambridge. Thinking I would be very clever I said:

"You see to what extent some crazy collectors will go, for I have just given £40 for these four sixpenny numbers!"

I had expected my customer to be startled, but he didn't appear to be affected in the least. He asked me quietly what my motive was in doing so, adding an enquiry as to the price I would in my turn accept for them. I explained that I was not quite sure whether I was at liberty to sell them, as they had originally been intended for a customer in his own country, Mr. Jacob Judge Klein. Mr. Klein, I was certain, would have willingly paid me the eighty pounds I knew the "Undergraduate Papers" to be worth.

"Still," said my visitor, "you might just as well sell them to me. You may find that I also can be a good customer."

Having already told this gentleman what the set had cost me (not dreaming that he would require them) I could not very well fix the price at £80. So I said he could have them for fifty. I was amazed when he answered:

"If you think they are worth it, Mr. Spencer, I'll take them."

In trying to be clever, therefore, I lost £30!

But there was consolation even for that. He purchased a good many other volumes, and gave

his name as George Vanderbilt, asking me to forward them to Biltmore, North Carolina—an estate measuring sixteen miles long and sixteen miles wide, as I afterwards discovered. On his return to America he corresponded with me on many occasions, and purchased many more books. He died some ten years ago.

Although a large proportion of my customers from abroad are resident in America it would, of course, be wrong to imagine that Mr. William Wright, of Paris, is the only gentleman who visited me from other countries. At least one gentleman hailed from Canada—the late Mr. Ross Robertson. And then there is Mr. Triggs of Australia, about whom I must say a word or two at the conclusion of this chapter.

The first time I received Mr. Robertson, the proprietor of several Canadian newspapers and founder of a children's hospital at a cost of £40,000 as a gift to the city of Toronto, he was making his wonderful collection of prints of old Canada. He came quietly into the shop, an elderly but well-preserved gentleman with laughing eyes, and asked if I could help him in that direction. As it happened I stocked a considerable number, and I led him upstairs and spread them before him. He asked me the price of several, and took them when he found that they were only a few pounds each. Then he came to one that was priced at £60. And as he was a stranger and I wasn't quite sure he wouldn't take me to be a lunatic if I quoted such a sum—as a

matter of truth, I would have seemed a lunatic to anyone not an expert in the subject—I could only say at that moment :

" Well, Sir, I haven't the nerve to ask you the price of this print."

He laid the picture down at that, pressed me for the quotation, and then burst out laughing.

" I am an experienced business man, Mr. Spencer," he said, " but I have never met a man with *half* the nerve you've got!"

Of course he made the purchase in the end at the price I had specified. Every time he came to London subsequently he visited my shop, bringing his wife on occasion. The last time he came was just after the war began. He bought prints even then. As he was taking his departure he said :

" What a lot of fools you Londoners have been ! For years Germany has been letting you have its script and taking your gold in exchange. And now I understand the Bank of England is stuffed with German paper money to the value of four hundred millions, for which you have given them actual coin!" There had been talk of a food shortage, and the food we had was already very bad. " Never mind, Spencer," he called out from the door, " we are sending you a million bushels of oats, so you are sure to have *something* to eat ! " That was the last I ever saw of a fine, humorous, Scottish-Canadian gentleman.

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From my establishment went the first book the late Harry Widener ever purchased for his great

Elkins Park Library. After his lamented death in the great Titanic diaster the collection was presented as a memorial by his mother to Harvard University. The volume I speak of was one of the many illustrated by George Cruikshank, and it cost him four shillings. Among my papers I have come upon a list of his requirements which he handed to me himself—he often came to England, generally lodging at Queen's Gate, W. There is "Ainsworth's Magazine" as one item, in twenty-six volumes, marked £24: and "Bentley's Miscellany," sixty-four volumes, £40: "Sketches by Boz," three volumes, £27 10s. od., and "A Tale of Two Cities," £4 15s. od. It is interesting to note these prices (long out of date, of course)—and others, also, especially that of the "New Arabian Nights" (2 vols.) in an additional Stevenson list, which has interest as well as pathos. The item is marked £8 10s. od.: to-day the market price, so great the vogue of "R. L. S." has become, is (as I have occasion to state in a later chapter) more than a hundred pounds.

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Two of my American friends (and I write them down as my friends with confidence, as I feel able to do with so many of the callers at 27 New Oxford Street) bore names which have been and are still, even after their death, household words the world over. I refer to Mr. Henry J. Heinz and Mr. Robert Hoe.

Mr. Heinz used to travel from Pittsburg two

or three times a year. He was the founder and head of the famous firm of pickle-makers. Although he could not strictly be called a book-collector, yet on every visit to England he made it a rule to call on me and buy large folio volumes on Costume, full of coloured plates. All kinds of costumes, they contained, and after a while he explained to me why he wanted them. He employed some hundreds of girls in his pickle factory and had formed a library of these curious volumes to amuse them in their luncheon hour! Mr. Heinz was very concerned about the welfare of his girls in many ways. He was also concerned about the welfare of those who ate his pickles, for he organised a system of manicuring in his works by which no girl was allowed to commence her duties for the day without her fingers being manicured and cleaned by one of a staff of six or seven experts.

The fame of Mr. Heinz rests, of course, on sweetened pickles, and I may as well add here what he described to me of his own beginnings. As a young man in Boston, Mass., he was eating pickles at a meal and some sugar fell among them by accident. He tasted pickles and sugar: their flavour was so appetising that he began to make experiments, and in time made up a concoction and offered it for sale. Nobody would buy his pickles at first: everybody laughed at him. But he took his wares to the Boston streets with a push-cart, his wife accompanying him and offering the pickles for sale to passers-by!

I need say little of the sequel, except that on the last occasion he came to England he was accompanied by half-a-dozen secretaries. He died two years ago.

Then there is Mr. Robert Hoe, just as successful with his invention of the epoch-making printing machine as Mr. Heinz was with his pickles, and yet incomparably more entitled to the name of bookman. The first time Mr. Hoe came into my shop, twenty or twenty-five years ago, he enquired if I could supply him with any pamphlets by Alexander Pope. I was not, of course, aware then of his identity. I took him upstairs to my second-floor rooms, where a number of these pamphlets were stored, and when he had examined them he demanded from me what money I required for the lot. I explained that as they were rather out of my way and I had never priced them properly I was not quite certain of their value: still, I would accept a hundred pounds. He immediately drew out a banknote for that amount, asking when he might call and look at some of the other pamphlets and volumes in the room. I answered that he could come whenever he pleased.

"How about Sunday morning?" he asked.

"Very well," I answered. Evidently he was not much concerned whether he was keeping me from church or not, because he came for several Sunday mornings, in a four-wheeled cab which he kept waiting for hours at the door; and he purchased a parcel of pamphlets on each occasion,

sometimes for £200, sometimes for £250. I never learnt who he was until one Sunday in August, when he arrived without the familiar cab and purchased rather more than he could carry away. While we were planning how they could be conveyed to him a violent thunderstorm came on, lasting for several hours. Thus I was able to get into more intimate association with him, and it did not add much to my interest in and liking for the old man, already well-assured, when he asked me to send his parcel to Robert Hoe and Company, at the Borough Road printing works, Southwark. I guessed then that he was the man I had heard so much about, for his fame as a book-buyer was in America already exceeding that of the printing machine inventor. After that he always sent to me the various portions of his privately printed catalogues as they were ready, suitably inscribed. I value these catalogues greatly. One of his treasures was the great "Gutenberg" Bible, which when he died a dozen years ago was sold for the largest amount any single book had ever realised before that time, a transaction which startled the bookman's world. Mr. Hoe's London residence was a flat in Whitehall Court; but he lived in New York, and there it was that he housed his wonderful library.

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And now for Mr. A. B. Triggs, of Australia. I have known no more enthusiastic collector than Mr. Triggs, brother of the well-known English

author of " The Garden of England." His home is at Yass, in New South Wales, the farmost part of it. He left the old country thirty-eight years ago with ten pounds in his purse, and he told me that he had suddenly conceived a desire to see England again, and, while he was here, to collect material for a small Dickens museum at Yass. I was glad to be able to arrange with Mr. (now Sir) H. F. Dickens, K.C., the only surviving son of the great novelist, to write a note for the opening of the Yass exhibition, and also to affix his autograph to Mr. Trigg's copy of the famous engraving by Sir Luke Fildes of " The Empty Chair."

The Triggs estate at Yass covers a quarter-million acres, for which the owner pays our King three farthings an acre per annum ! On these acres are several hundred thousand sheep. At a distance of every ten miles a steward is established, living alone in his shanty, and Mr. Triggs told me a little story of one of these stewards that recalled the letter written by Charles Dickens to Miss Coutts in which he said : " London never was so empty . . . I went to see one of my tailors, who lives in Piccadilly. He couldn't bear the silence and has gone to Brighton."

Once when Mr. Triggs was going the rounds of his estate, which of necessity he could only do at rare intervals, one of the stewards, a studious man who spent all his spare time in reading the classics, handed in his notice that he intended to leave Mr. Triggs' service. On being pressed for a

reason he explained that he desired to go farther away, farther up-country than ever. Within the past two months, he said, four people has passed through his neighbourhood and it was getting too much like Sydney !

CHAPTER VII

Dickensiana (1). Where my Heart is. The Dickensians who were Afraid of their Wives. My Dickens Manuscripts. A Dickens Poem. My Association with Miss Georgina Hogarth. How I Bought the MS. of *The Cricket on the Hearth*, and how I Sold it.

I BROKE off my last chapter with the brief, bright and romantic story of a sheep-breeder's steward because I realised that although I had not by any means exhausted my list of American customers I was beginning to encroach on the section of my book which I had planned as my *Dickensiana*. My other memories of friends across the sea, as will now be seen, belong more properly to the chapters so headed, chapters which I approach with emotions whose nature the reader must fathom as he may, so impossible would it be for me to analyse them myself.

Charles Dickens and the tradition he created by the agency of his great writings have an everlasting vitality. Authors may come, and authors may go: but those who, like the Tennysonian brook, run on for ever are by no means inconsiderable in number—although the author of "Pickwick" relinquished long since his right

to be compared with anything so tinkling as a brook. His influence is like an ocean's: it is felt everywhere. He is irresistible—have we not lately witnessed the return to his bosom of the prodigal sons of contemporary criticism, young men who are gravely announcing in their literary causeries that Dickens is "coming to his own again," as though, forsooth, their own individual and uncertain patronage of him is to be interpreted in terms of the universal? The plain truth is that the pendulum-swing of popular favour has never yet affected him. Since his death on June 9th, 1870, the devotion of his readers has never lessened. Rather has it intensified and spread more widely every year, until there are no more interesting literary events in the English-speaking world than the Dickensian Society's and other celebrations on the seventh of February or the ninth of June in each year at Westminster Abbey, where, for one brief pause of dedication, we stand about his grave: and "nothing stirs" as we think either of that fateful birth-time or of the final event that brought him to that immortal corner—"The old, old fashion. The fashion that came in with our first garments, and will last unchanged until our race has run its course, and the wide firmament is rolled up like a scroll. The old, old fashion—death! . . . O thank God, all who see it, for that older fashion yet, of immortality!"

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DICKENSIANA

The recent sale in London of letters and manuscript written by Charles Dickens to Miss Coutts and the large sums of money realised for them must have opened the eyes of many folk to the extraordinary heightening, year by year, of the value of Dickensian relics. I think I may safely say that a fair share of these have come into my possession during the past forty years, at a cost, however, which might make even a millionaire instinctively tighten his grip on his purse. A natural consequence of this has been that book-lovers and Dickensians from every part of the world have made their way sooner or later to New Oxford Street. As I sit among my books and pictures, attending to the correspondence that includes (such is the influence of a speeded-up civilisation on bookmen) feverish telegrams of enquiry about particular volumes or prints, and perhaps a Marconigram or so, it does not matter which author my attention is fixed upon : sooner or later in the day I am certain to be drawn back to Charles Dickens. I have grown into the habit of expecting some lady or gentleman to arrive and ask to see, as is done in so many cases, everything and anything relating to the genius who has given entrancement to human loneliness even in the farmost corners of the world.

From room to room the pilgrim is free to wander, from the shop-basement right to the top of the old building which means so much to me after my long tenancy. Always the inspection ends in warmly expressed amazement : the revela-

tion, it would seem, has been well-nigh unbelievable. Already Mr. Micawber, Dick Swiveller, Little Nell, Mark Tapley, and the Nicklebys had an actual and separate existence in the pilgrim's mind ; but for evermore he will feel that he has met them in the flesh, and, above all, met their creator also, who accomplished the miracle of them in little over thirty-eight years, a parallel to some extent with Shakespeare's thirty-two.

How often have I quietly watched a customer turning over the leaves of a Dickens volume or some pictorial representation as though hypnotised ! No longer is his existence dated by this or that particular year of grace ; for he is walking with an immortal through the highways and byways of London, or watching a magic pen race over the paper in the study at Devonshire Terrace or Gad's Hill, or forming one of a huge, enthusiastic crowd that, as it listens to the familiar figure on the platform reading from a manuscript, is rocking the old St. James's Hall with laughter, or bringing into that building the stillness of tears.

I shall not attempt to describe more than one or two of the items closely associated with Charles Dickens that have been or are among my possessions. There are three pages of the original manuscript of " Oliver Twist," the only portion remaining in existence : written in a large easy hand, with three or four corrections to a sheet. The pages are numbered 17, 18, and 23. At the top of page 17 is written " Chapter the Tenth,"

with the familiar title " Oliver becomes better acquainted," etc. In the opening paragraph " old gentleman " is carefully crossed out and the word " Jew " substituted, the earlier phrase appearing again lower down in the same paragraph. The text still varies from that finally used. It is doubtless the first draft. Dickens gave these three pages to Mrs. Rebecca Ball Wilson, a first cousin, her mother's sister being his mother. For these three pages there are customers willing to give me over four hundred pounds. A little less valuable—figured at about £225, I believe,—is my manuscript sheet of " Dombey and Son," being the whole of page 79 in the first edition copied out on note-paper and holographed. Dickens evidently did this for exhibition purposes of one kind or another, and signed the manuscript in full with " London, Twenty-fifth February 1848." There is also a sheet of paper, probably unique, on which both Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins signed their names with the date, September 12, 1857—probably while on the " lazy tour of two idle apprentices " which they afterwards wrote about so delightfully in " Household Words." I possess two splendid photographs of Dickens, both taken in America in 1868. One is a full length portrait, aggressive, confident, bearing a New York photographer's addresss and signed by Dickens in his familiar greenish-blue ink " Charles Dickens, First May, 1868." The other, which, I think, shows the most character of any likeness I have ever seen,

AN AUTOGRAPH POEM BY CHARLES DICKENS

This poem, written out and signed by Charles Dickens, is one of the songs from *The Village Coquettes* (Cf. illustration, p. 203), and was copied out by the author for a young lady's album.

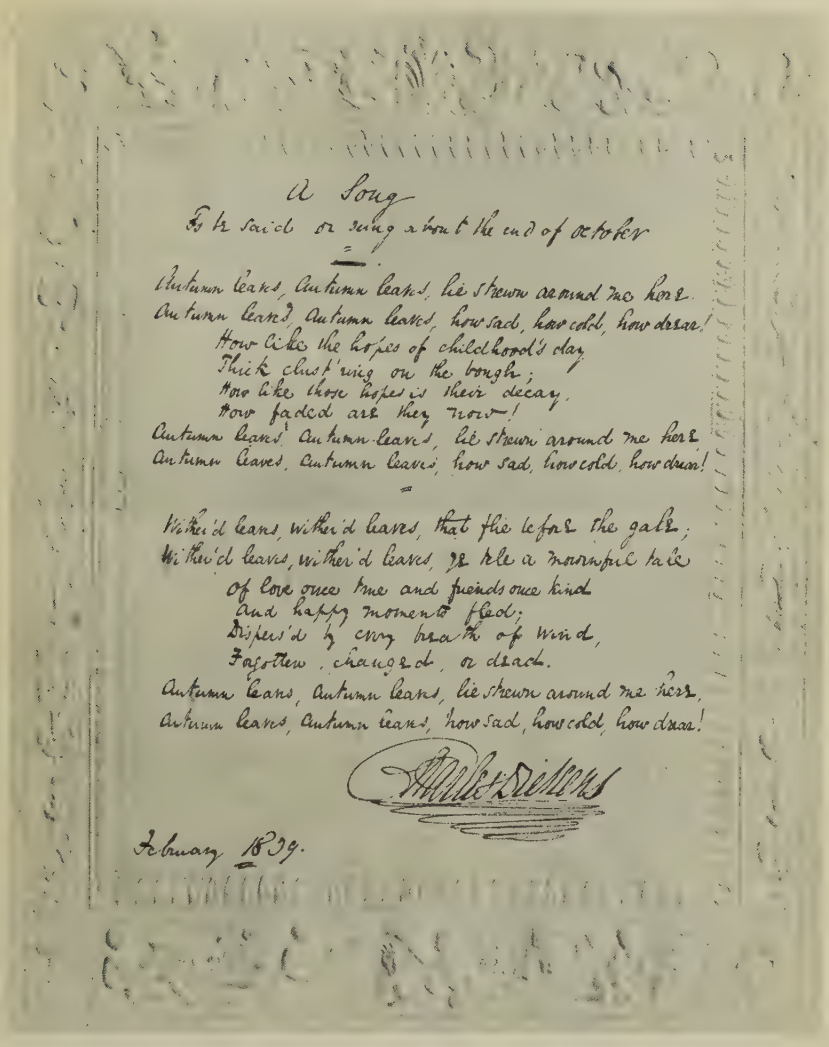
The manuscript is headed "A Song to be Said or Sung about the end of October"; but the verses originally appeared in his "comic opera," entitled *The Village Coquettes*, performed at the St. James's Theatre in 1837.

Act 1, scene 2, opens with the melancholy George Edmunds delivering himself thus: "How thickly the fallen leaves lie scattered at the feet of that old row of elm trees! When I first met Lucy on this spot, it was a fine spring day, and those same leaves were trembling in the sunshine, as green and bright as if their beauty would last for ever. What a contrast they present now, and how true an emblem of my own lost happiness."

Then follows the "Song—George Edmunds":

"Autumn leaves, Autumn leaves, lie strewn around me here;
Autumn leaves, Autumn leaves, how sad, how cold, how drear!
How like the hopes of childhood's day
Thick clust'ring on the bough:
How like those hopes in their decay,
How faded are they now!
Autumn leaves, Autumn leaves, lie strewn around me here;
Autumn leaves, Autumn leaves, how sad, how cold, how drear!

"Wither'd leaves, wither'd leaves, that fly before the gale:
Wither'd leaves, wither'd leaves, ye tell a mournful tale
Of love once true and friends once kind
And happy moments fled;
Dispers'd by every breath of wind,
Forgotten, changed, or dead.
Autumn leaves, Autumn leaves, lie strewn around me here;
Autumn leaves, Autumn leaves, how sad, how cold, how drear!"



A Song

To be said or sung about the end of October

Autumn leaves, Autumn leaves, lie strewn around me here.
Autumn leaves, Autumn leaves, how sad, how cold, how drear.
How like the hopes of childhood's day
Thick clust'ring on the bough;
How like those hopes is their decay.
How faded are they now!
Autumn leaves, Autumn leaves, lie strewn around me here
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Wither'd leaves, wither'd leaves, that flee before the gale;
Wither'd leaves, wither'd leaves, ye tell a mournful tale
Of love once true and friends once kind
And happy moments fled;
Dispers'd by every breath of wind,
Forgotten, changed, or dead.
Autumn leaves, Autumn leaves, lie strewn around me here,
Autumn leaves, Autumn leaves, how sad, how cold, how drear!

Charles Dickens

February 1839.

AN AUTOGRAPH POEM BY CHARLES DICKENS

is autographed and inscribed " Baltimore 11th February 1868." Those who are interested in knowing the market price of such articles will perhaps be surprised to learn that the New York photograph is marked at £32 and that from Baltimore at £18.

In an earlier chapter on William Makepeace Thackeray I recalled how wistfully the author of " Vanity Fair " had desired to be looked upon as a poet. I think something of the same ambition must have lain deep in the heart of each of our authors whose greatness eventually came through some other branch of literature. Certainly Charles Dickens had his period of dallying with the Muses also. We may be quite emphatic about one thing in his case, and in Thackeray's moreover : had they been writing at the present time instead of eighty years ago our " Georgian " anthologies would not have been graced through the inclusion of their names. Here is a poem which Charles Dickens copied out on bordered album paper for a Miss Noble in February, 1839, with his full signature making its usual flourish at the foot.

Most people cherish ambitions other than those the Almighty endowed them with the power to achieve. And yet, likely enough, Miss Noble's album was enhanced by those verses, as will be the library of some Dickens enthusiast sooner or later.

It is a commonplace to say that the beauty and wonder, philosophy and wisdom, humour and pathos of Charles Dickens have drawn to him

the cabman in the street as well as the millionaire, the worker at the bench and the seamstress at her needle no less than the peer and the peeress with their elegant drawing-room volumes ; but it may sound strange for me to say that others than men of wealth and distinction have spent their lives in seeking out Dickensian treasures for their private collection. One of the most devoted of collectors I ever knew was, as a matter of fact, a greengrocer ! His name was Mr. W. T. Pevier, and his shop was in Lupus Street, Pimlico.

I always smile when I think of Mr. Pevier, though not because he was a greengrocer. He used to visit me regularly on his early closing day. He would carry his purchases away with him at first, but later I was asked by him to send the parcels by my younger brother—he refused to trust them with anyone else. At a given time my brother had to be at the corner of Lupus Street, and when Mr. Pevier gave him the signal from the shop my brother walked across the street, entered, and asked for a bottle of ginger-beer. The parcel was stealthily handed over during the transaction, and Mr. Pevier was thus able to smuggle them into the house without his wife observing them. He stored the books, I believe, among the potatoes.

Mr. Pevier had his difficulties, none the less, even then. Once he purchased for forty pounds (small wonder his wife disapproved of his collecting propensities !) the four plates to Part I. of " Pickwick " in their first state. As these went

into a small compass, and he could carry them home in his jacket pocket without anyone noticing them, the transaction was without obstacles on either side. Soon afterwards, however, he bought from me the four large extra plates to "Pickwick" by Dulcken. These measured each about 18 by 12 inches, and we decided that it was too much to risk the parcel being sent to the shop in the customary way. Mrs. Pevier would be certain to detect it. A long discussion ensued about ways and means, and then my customer said :

"I have an excellent plan, Mr. Spencer, an excellent plan !"

Before I could ask him to explain he had stripped off his jacket, and taking up the parcel of plates he instructed me to tie them on to his back ! I laughed outright as I did so. Then he put his jacket on again and went off home, marching as bold as brass over the threshold and into the potato store ! How I teased Dr. Tweed of Dorset Square with the anecdote when I discovered that he, too, found it necessary to leave his parcels of books with the baker at the corner, smuggling them in later when his wife was not looking ! His affinity, I told him, was a greengrocer ! Doubtless when Mrs. Pevier realised what enormous sums those prints and first editions fetched at Sotheby's sale-room after that tradesman-collector's death she would alter her view of that (to her) unaccountable waywardness on the part of her vanished lord and master.

. . . . . .

Charles Dickens died, of course, before I was out of my infancy. But my personal relation with his household has been memorable, and a matter, on my side, for the deepest pride. I have not failed to recognise, indeed, that whatever authority my own knowledge of Dickensiana has acquired through a close and extensive study of the various issues, peculiarities of illustrations, parts, dates, bindings, and so on, it would have been relatively without significance were I not privileged to claim among my intimate acquaintances the novelist's famous son, now Sir Henry F. Dickens, K.C., and also the lady to whom Charles Dickens left in his last will and testament his " grateful blessing as the best and truest friend man ever had "—his sister-in-law, Miss Georgina Hogarth.

I knew Miss Hogarth for the last ten years of her life—she was ninety-one when she died a little while ago. She paid a personal visit to me to enquire if I could supply a few first editions of Charles Dickens' novels for a bazaar which she was helping to organise. I was able to contribute a good number of valuable articles for exhibition, and from that time we became great cronies. The old lady lived by herself at Egerton Terrace, Brompton, attended by two maidservants.

Miss Hogarth had one failing, so far as I could observe : she spent a deal of money on cut flowers for the decoration of her rooms. As a matter of truth I fear she lived beyond her income just then, because she began to send her maid

to my shop once or twice a week with Dickens relics, a practice she followed for eight or nine years. Sometimes I purchased from her to the extent of £40 in a week.

In addition to acquiring in this manner some of the original correspondence that appeared in the "Letters," edited by herself and Dickens's eldest daughter in 1880, the copy came into my hands of the New Testament used by Dickens and found in his travelling desk after his death: a precious lock of his hair, taken from his head as he lay dead, and given by Miss Mamie Dickens to his sister, Mrs. Henry Austin, who in turn left it in her will with other relics to Miss Florence Dickens in 1893; and, a souvenir less personal, but equally interesting,—his writing sloop. Many a lover of Dickens has felt a personal loss in looking upon the celebrated picture of his deserted study by Sir Luke Fildes, R.A., that has been reproduced and re-engraved on countless occasions. The sloop is prominent in this drawing, and I can think of no better fortune than I had when I became its possessor through Miss Hogarth. Another of my souvenirs, which must have been handled and spoken into times without number by the great novelist, is the speaking-tube, with whistle and fittings, which hung near the editorial chair at the "Household Words" office in Wellington Street.

To receive me at her home or to visit my shop for a chat about her brother-in-law was always, I believe for us both, a pleasant event. I learned

Univ. of Arizona Library

many valuable facts about Dickens the man at such times, and I gathered from her charming conversation that she had spent every hour of forty years in his household. I shall always have cause to remember the earliest occasion I entered her house, for the first thing I saw, lying on the edge of her bookcase, was the original MS. of " The Cricket on the Hearth."

Now all the important manuscripts, except those of " The Cricket," " The Christmas Carol," " The Battle of Life " and " The Haunted Man " (which was sold during the Burdett-Coutts sale in May 1922) are, I am thankful to say, lodged at the South Kensington Museum, to which they were presented by John Forster, Dickens' biographer and friend. Consequently the MS. of " The Cricket on the Hearth " had great value, and I took it up, remarking to Miss Hogarth :

" This is so precious, ma'am, that, if I may say so, I think you ought not to leave it lying about in such a way. It would be the easiest thing in the world for anyone to slip into the room during your absence and steal it."

" Yes," she answered, " I must really take more care of it." She explained how the MS. had come into her possession. She made an exchange with John Forster for one of Dickens's notebooks he especially desired.

" May I take the liberty," I said, " of asking what you think of doing with it?"

" What would *you* do with it, Mr. Spencer?" she returned.

I expressed the opinion that I personally would be happy if she would give it to the British Museum, and hoped that she would provide for it in her will. "But," I added, "if you change your mind and wish to part with it I should be greatly obliged if you would offer me the first refusal."

"What would you give me for it?" she asked.

"A thousand pounds."

She was plainly startled by the magnitude of the amount. When she informed me later that she had prepared her will and added a clause bequeathing it to the British Museum, as I had suggested, I was flattered and no less pleased.

Seven or eight years elapsed, and one Saturday morning, to my surprise, I received word from her that she was wondering if the offer still held for the purchase of the original MS. of "The Cricket on the Hearth." She was in need of money, she explained, to pay doctors' bills and solicitors' fees. I sent a message back to her, repeating the offer, but that I preferred to conduct negotiations in the presence of some other member of the family.

Several people were present, therefore, when I arrived the same afternoon by appointment at her home. After the introductions Miss Hogarth said, without any delay :

"Well, Mr. Spencer, do you still feel inclined to give a thousand pounds for the manuscript of 'The Cricket on the Hearth'?"

"Yes, Miss Hogarth," I answered.

"Very good," she said. "You may take it."

In the presence of the others I wrote out my cheque for the amount, and came away with that magnificent treasure in my possession. Of course I knew I could not afford to retain it for any great length of time, and when after a while its value was double that which I had given for it I allowed the book world to know that the MS. was in the market. No one in this country, however, was willing to pay £2000: they could not afford it, they said! Then came the spring of eight years ago, and with it arrived two famous booksellers from the States.

One of them came post-haste to my shop. He appeared first on a Sunday morning to make sure that I still had the MS., and returned the following day as early as nine o'clock. He asked me to take him upstairs to have a chat. After some discussion he offered me £1500 there and then, and increased the amount to £1750.

While I was explaining that I was unwilling to take less than £2000 (at the present moment the MS. is worth £3500!) an assistant came upstairs and whispered to me that a gentleman wished to see me down below. As I was already engaged on important business upstairs, I sent for the gentleman's name. He would not give it, however, although he said I would recognise him when I saw him. Becoming curious, I asked to be excused for a moment, and went downstairs.

Of course I recognised the newcomer at once. He was Mr. Brooks, the well-known bookseller

of Minneapolis. His first words of greeting were : " Mr. Spencer, have you sold the 'Cricket' MS. ?"

" No, Mr. Brooks," I replied, " I haven't actually sold it, but I am afraid I can't open negotiations with you."

" But," said he, " you've simply got to !"

" In justice to the gentleman upstairs," said I, " you must await your turn. He has the first chance to buy the manuscript for two thousand pounds."

" Mr. Spencer," he persisted, " you've got to sell it to me. Otherwise I shall cancel all the deals I have made with you, and will never do business with you any more !"

Thus the situation became serious. To me it would mean a loss of many thousands of pounds if he were to carry out his threat. He was gripping me by the coat, and looking very excited.

" You place me in an impossible situation, Mr. Brooks." I asked him to put himself in the position of the gentleman upstairs, but it was useless. His persistence was so prolonged and so painfully intense that I had to give way. " Very well," I said in the end, reluctantly, and disliking the affair extremely. " I'll sell the MS. to you. But you'll have to settle with the gentleman who is waiting upstairs."

" O that's alright," he said. " Now I'll go along to my hotel and get the money."

I went upstairs actually trembling. Never before had I been in such a dilemma. When I broke the news to my other visitor he naturally

flew into a towering rage. For a moment I expected him to strike me !

" To prove to you, Mr. Spencer," he exclaimed, " that I had intended to take the manuscript away here's the money you asked for." And he threw down on the table a roll of notes.

I did all I could to pacify him, promising him that he would never regret the loss. After a while he calmed down, recognising how unavoidable was the sale to his rival, and that, after all, the fault was his in delaying to accept my figure. " Here's a book I'll give you," I said impulsively. It was a presentation copy of "American Notes" autographed by Charles Dickens to Thomas Carlyle, probably worth £250. In our subsequent business dealings I made him several concessions, and we became good friends. But I know that when those two dealers next met there were some recriminations, slightly heated.

I learned afterwards from Mr. Brooks that when he guessed from my assistant's manner that someone upstairs was considering the purchase of the manuscript he suddenly adopted that belligerent attitude as a last hope. For before he came into my shop he had already re-sold the " Cricket " for £2250 ! Thus ended an incident in which the most beautiful article I have ever had to sell during my forty years' experience was the cause of the most unpleasant transaction I have ever been concerned in. The MS. now forms part of the Pierpont Morgan library.

CHAPTER VIII

Dickensiana (2). A Son of Charles Dickens. Some Quaint Old Dickensians. Some of Dickens's own Friends I have known. Mr. Percy Fitzgerald and Joseph Grego especially. My Dickens Playbills. My Contribution as a Pickwickian, and some Famous Exhibitions.

At the beginning of 1849 two events of importance occurred in Charles Dickens's eventful life. One of them was the commencement of his best-known novel, of which he wrote the first two chapters as :

" The Copperfield Survey of the World as it rolled.
Being the personal history, experience, and observation,
of David Copperfield the Younger, of Blunderstone Rookery "—

though the student of Dickens knows this well enough already. The other event preceded it by a month, for in January of the year of " David Copperfield " his eighth child, Henry Fielding Dickens was born. And not only the student of Dickens, but the political and legal world also,

knows that Sir H. F. Dickens, K.C., figured on the list of the King's Birthday Honours in June, 1922. How proud of his son the great novelist would have been were he living to-day, though not necessarily because of his recognition at Court, which, as the "Nation" lately remarked, was tardy enough!

I think I may say that among the devotees of his father's genius I have known none more fervent than Sir Henry F. Dickens. Invaluable has he been to students of the novels in helping to solve the problems which have presented themselves. I recall gladly his personal kindnesses to me. I have a letter before me now, for example, in which he clears the air concerning that delightful journal, "The Gad's Hill Gazette," written, edited, and published by Charles Dickens' children. "My father," he says, "exercised no supervision of any kind as to the preparation or publication of the 'Gazette,' or as to omission, rejection, or putting into form of any of the items. It was not done entirely by myself. In the first inception of the 'Gazette,' when it was in the hands of myself and two of my brothers and was written in ink on ordinary writing paper, our subscribers were limited to members of the household. When I took it on myself with the manifold writer I had several subscribers outside the family, and when I printed the paper with a printing-press my subscribers increased to somewhere over 100; but the copies still in existence must be very few and rare."

Naturally I, with the bookman's blood in me,

could not rest until I had acquired a set of these Gad's Hill Gazettes—they are indeed "very few and rare."[1]

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"I can't believe it, and don't, and won't," wrote Charles Dickens from 5 Hyde Park Place, where he was lodging in January, 1870, "but they say Harry's twenty-first birthday is next Sunday. I have entered him at the Temple just now: and if he don't get a fellowship at Trinity Hall when his time comes I shall be disappointed, if in the present disappointed state of existence." To the boy himself Dickens wrote some of the most beautiful letters in all that beautiful collection edited by Miss Hogarth and his eldest daughter in 1880—some of the best ever written, as I believe, from father to son.

He gives the advice he gave to each of his children in turn—to study the New Testament as the one unfailing guide in life. "Similarly I impress upon you the habit of saying a Christian prayer every night and morning. These things have stood by me all through my life, and remember that I tried to render the New Testament intelligible to you and lovable by you when you were a baby."

Concerning this rendering of the New Testament, which was done in the form of a small book, Sir Henry Fielding Dickens has informed me that an American publisher lately offered any sum he demanded for permission to print it in the United States, brief though the manuscript is.

[1] A set sold at Sotheby's in June, 1923, for £270.

But as Charles Dickens had left the strongest injunctions that the work was never to be published, Sir Henry was obliged to tell the American publisher that even had he offered a million pounds "down on the nail" there would have been no alternative to a refusal.

Finally, there is a note of congratulation on the good start his son had made in the Union debates at Cambridge University. "Take any amount of pains about it: open your mouth well and roundly, speak to the last person visible, and give yourself time."

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It moves me deeply to be able to think to myself somewhat after the following manner, of the person I am conversing with: Charles Dickens met this gentleman face to face. He heard him speak, as I hear him now. He gripped the hand that is being held out to me. Not only in the instance of Sir Henry Fielding Dickens have I had this experience, but there are other old friends and familiar visitors about whom the same thought has come to me, impressively and with no uncertainty. It was in this shop parlour that I assisted Mr. Percy Fitzgerald in the compilation of his "History of Pickwick." The letter which led to that pleasant task lies before me now. "I am preparing a little book on Pickwickian subjects," he wrote—we were strangers then—"and I wish you would lend me your notes on the plates to select from." And the relation of Dickens and Mr. Fitzgerald, who

is still living down in Pimlico, may be gathered from the fact that among his *Dickensiana* is a presentation copy of "David Copperfield" to the Hon. Mrs. Percy Fitzgerald—a marriage gift, with an inscription in Dickens' autograph: and a presentation copy of the "Pickwick Papers" (2 vols. 1858), to Mr. Fitzgerald himself, also from the author. (Dickens' dog "Sultan" was a gift from Mr. Fitzgerald.) "A very clever fellow is Mr. F.", wrote Dickens to Bulwer Lytton in 1866, "(you may perhaps remember that I brought him down to Knebworth on the guild day), and his charming sisters. . . ."

Mr. Fitzgerald made errors in his "History" of which I, for my part, hasten to plead "Not Guilty." He gave the second state of certain of the plates as the first state, and so on. But no one knows more about that humourous masterpiece than he does. I believe he knows the text of it by heart, from beginning to end. A tall, slender gentleman, unconventional in dress and manner, once in the law as a profession, Mr. Fitzgerald is a profound scholar, and well known as the author of some fascinating volumes on Charles Lamb and others.

Until his death a few months ago Mr. Edwin Drew was the oldest Dickens enthusiast living. Every year he insisted on my accompanying him to Westminster Abbey with a wreath for "C. D.'s" grave, which visit aroused the indignation of the vergers, the practice being forbidden except in special cases. "It is of no use, sir," the head

verger said one day to Mr. Drew in my presence. "The Dean won't allow it, and besides, I've told you so often enough." After a deal of tactful persuasion on my part the official calmed down sufficiently for me to say: "Mr. Drew is an old man, and I shall esteem it as a great favour if you will give your permission, Mr. ——?" "Weller" was the reply, and at the name you might have knocked me down with a feather.[1] But, to my disappointment, he proved to be no relation of Samivel's! A well-known authority is my friend Mr. J. F. Dexter, in whose collection is an interesting galley-proof sheet of "The Old Curiosity Shop," showing excisions made by Dickens in response to the demand of the printer, who had written at the top: "There is a page and a half too much here," which compelled the author to cut down his study by twenty-seven inches of text. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Dexter again on the very day I wrote these lines. It was at Sotheby's, and he said to me, "I am seventy-five to-day, Spencer." I wished him many returns, and added, "I had thought you must be older, because you do not appear to have changed at all since I was a boy." "Well," he said, "I consider I am only a youngster even now. Because I have got enough material together to make another 'Life' of Dickens, as high in its bulk as we stand. I think it will take twenty years to put it in the order I want, but I don't intend to start it until I am eighty-five, when I presume I shall be getting feeble."

[1] Mr. Weller died at Westminster early in the present year.—EDITOR.

JOSEPH GREGO

No more Dickens-like Dickensian ever lived than Mr. Joseph Grego, who wrote the authoritative " Life of Thomas Rowlandson," in two volumes, 1880 : " Thackeray the Humourist and Man of Letters": and " Charles Dickens : the Story of His Life." The two last-named books were actually written when Grego was a lad, for the publisher Camden Hotten, forerunner of the firm of Chatto and Windus. Both publications bore the nom-de-plume of " Theodore Taylor."

It delighted me to welcome this quaint gentleman into my shop. When he compiled a work called " Pictorial Pickwickiana," I assisted him in many ways, loaning him many fascinating illustrations from Dickens's publications. Chapman & Hall published the book in two volumes in 1899. Mr. Grego was Scotch in spite of his name: he wasn't very old, at least not outwardly —perhaps his great flowing moustache was deceptive. He had a very sarcastic tongue, and exercised it sometimes in criticism of my shop. " I can't understand," he would say, " why you deal in such expensive books, such rare first editions, and yet keep them all packed up so that nobody can look at them without asking ! Why, I should want to display them like they do in the British Museum !" Of course my retort was that there was all the difference in the world between the floor space at 27 New Oxford Street and that of the great State institution a stone's throw away in Great Russell Street.

Mr. Grego was a bachelor as well as a Bohemian.

He lived with his sister in Greville Square, London. He invited me on several occasions to go and make my bow to Miss Grego, but I was prevented, although after he died I often wished I had taken the opportunity. When Messrs. Puttock & Simpson, the auctioneers, sold his engravings and drawings, there was discovered such a quantity that more than a pantechnicon of unframed works were removed from his house. I purchased practically the whole of them in order to insure that I got the pick ; and among them was Grego's complete collection of drawings and prints by Thomas Rowlandson. These are all still in my possession.

Mr. Grego had the misfortune, or what I conceived to be the misfortune, of meeting with a gentleman during the last few years of his life who made a great change in the old journalist. It was Mr. T. W. Barratt, one of a succession of Pears' Soap proprietors. He and Grego became boon companions—I can see them now, driving about in Mr. Barratt's landau and pair. It was a profitable friendship for Grego in the material sense, of course : he got rid of thousands of pounds' worth of his Morland prints to the wealthy Barratt ! On the first occasion Grego brought Barratt into my shop the latter purchased a " Life of Morland" from me for sixty pounds.

" Let me see," said I, noting down my new customer's name and address. " Is it Mr. T. W. Barr*ett* ?"

HABLOT K. BROWNE ("PHIZ")

Watercolour illustration for "Barnaby Rudge"

"Barr*att*, please," drawled Grego, once so careless about such matters, now as particular as though he had been born with an aristocratic accent.

Doctor R. T. Jupp, whose Dickens collection was recently put up at auction in the Anderson Galleries, New York, was an old customer, and I regarded him as a genuine friend. It was through my agency, indeed, that he compiled the whole of his library, and his intention, had he lived, was to form a permanent Dickens museum in London, the whole of the profits to be handed to the late Sir Arthur Pearson in aid of St. Dunstan's Hospital for the Blind. He told me once that His Majesty the King had promised to listen to the address at the opening celebrations.

Doctor Jupp was a wealthy man, and during the war he presented an ambulance column, costing £20,000. He died two years ago through an accident: he was kicked by a horse in France. It was a great loss, for he was only a young man, though the chairman of many businesses, including some provincial cinemas. Among the volumes and pictures I sold to him was the famous oil-painting of Dolly Varden, by W. P. Frith, R.A. This had come into my possession when the contents of Fort House, Broadstairs, were sold some years ago. The beautiful ivory box which Dickens gave at his wedding to his bride, Kate Hogarth, was also one of his acquirements from my shop. Eight hundred dollars was paid for it at the New York sale of Dr. Jupp's collection. It is sad to

think that this genuine Dickensian did not live long enough to carry his high purpose into effect.

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Once I had the gratification of contributing a little thing of value to the lore of "Pickwick," with rather embarrassing consequences to myself. Thirty-five years ago I discovered a mistake that had been made in the engraved title page of the first edition. While preparing the earliest issue of the plate for that edition the engraver had been so carried away by the story that, without noticing it, he printed "Tony Veller" on the nameboard over the window, when, of course, it should have been "Weller." About seven hundred and fifty copies had been issued when the rectification was made: and apparently no-one at the time had said anything about the matter.

I was examining the copy in my possession one afternoon when all at once I noticed the "V." My next catalogue, therefore, contained an announcement that I was offering for sale a unique copy. But I reckoned without the customers to whom I had previously sold copies of the first edition of "Pickwick": they came crowding into my shop, saying, "Look here, Mr. Spencer, you sold these parts as a first issue. They contain the 'W,' not the 'V'!" One or two hasty individuals, moreover, definitely accused me of sharp practices. It took me a long time, even years, to get hold of sufficient copies with the "V" to soothe their savage breasts. That single letter makes a difference of twenty or thirty pounds in

the value of any copy in the original parts. There are other points, of course, which distinguish that edition (of which I possess an original set containing the "first paid advertisements"), but of them all this is perhaps the most attractive and important.

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Recently it was suggested to me by the editor of "The Clique," Mr. Frank Murray, that I should allow myself to be persuaded into organising a Dickens Exhibition on a more thoroughgoing scale than has yet been attempted. Some day, possibly, I may have the leisure to arrange for this; nothing would delight me more, especially as the occasions on which I have lent my collection for use at other exhibitions have been little more than "appetisers" to a huge public of Dickens-lovers who are obliged to depend on them for their glimpses of the activity that went to the making of the novels.

No display of *Dickensiana*, indeed, fails to awaken the liveliest interest. I remember one such event away back in 1899, that of the Advertisers' Exhibition in the Niagara Hall; I had the pleasure of loaning for the occasion my collection of old Dickens playbills, relating to dramas based on his works and acted at the Adelphi, Lyceum, Olympic, Strand, and other London theatres between 1837 and 1845. The bill of the Lyceum when Madame Céleste was "sole lessee and proprietress" announces the performance of "A Tale of Two Cities," adapted by

Tom Taylor and acted by Walter Lacy, James Vining, and the proprietress herself. " Madame Céleste was with me yesterday," Dickens had written just previously (in November, 1859), " wishing to dramatise 'A Tale of Two Cities' for the Lyceum, after bringing out the Christmas pantomime. I gave her my permission, and the book : but I fear that her company is a very poor one." The playbill made the additional statement that the author, " in the kindest manner, supervised the production of the piece." He did indeed. " I am very hard worked just now," he writes to Miss Coutts in one of the recently sold letters, " for, finding that I could not prevent the dramatising of my last story I have devoted myself for a fortnight to the trying to infuse into the conventionalities of the Theatre something not usual there in the way of Life and Truth." In the playbill of " Oliver Twist " at the Theatre Royal, Liverpool, are the names of Mr. Yates and Mr. and Mrs. Keeley, as Fagin, the Dodger, and Nancy respectively. The advertisements of " Little Em'ly," " The Old Curiosity Shop," " Nicholas Nickleby," and " Martin Chuzzlewit " include names that were once to be conjured with —George Belmore, David Fisher, Pattie Josephs, Miss Woolgar, and Mrs. A. Wigan. J. L. Toole played the Artful Dodger in the dramatised version of " Oliver Twist."

It must not be forgotten that the great novelist was not only fascinated all his life by the glamour of footlights—his own " Strolling Players," the

famous amateur company who acted in London and the provinces on behalf of various charities, are well remembered: he wrote a good deal directly for the theatre. In 1903 the Dickens Fellowship organised an exhibition at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, and the very interesting catalogue compiled and edited by that well-known writer, Mr. F. G. Kitton, records that among my loans was a set of the plays which Dickens either wrote by himself or, as in the case of "No Thoroughfare," a drama in five acts, 1867, with the co-operation of Wilkie Collins. There are "The Village Coquettes," a comic opera, and "Is She His Wife? or, Something Singular," a comic "burletta," both dated 1836; "The Strange Gentleman," a comic "burletta" which was published with an extremely rare frontispiece by "Phiz" in 1837; and "Mr. Nightingale's Diary," a farce in one act. An etching by F. W. Pailthorpe, in both states, and a playbill is inserted in my copy of "The Village Coquettes," the playbill announcing performances of that piece and of "'The Village Coquettes,' Boz's Popular Operatic Burletta, the music composed by John Hullah," on different nights at the St. James's Theatre in 1837. "The Lamplighter," a farce (1838), was written by Dickens for Macready at Covent Garden Theatre, but never performed. He afterwards converted "The Lamplighter" into a tale called "The Lamplighter's Story" for "Pic-Nic Papers."

A souvenir that caused a good deal of comment

at the Fellowship exhibition was the Quill Pen which had formerly belonged to the novelist, and which I was able to send with the following certificate signed by "A. Seymour, for many years in his employment": "This is to certify that the Quill Pen now in the possession of Mr. Spencer was used by Charles Dickens and was taken off his desk by me the day after his death, June 10th, 1870." I also sent a porcelain memorandum slate which was in the possession of Dickens at his "All the Year Round" office when he died. Upon the upper portion of the frame is inscribed, on the left hand, "Mr. C. D.," and on the right hand, "Mr. C. D. Junr." The slate was probably in use for many years, and it will be recalled that when W. H. Wills retired in 1860, on account of ill-health, from the position of assistant editor to the paper, Dickens' eldest son Charles was installed in his place.

Some years ago the London newspapers organised an exhibition that illustrated their various histories and activities, and I was able to lend the "Daily News" the whole of my collection of Dickens letters, MSS., and also a copy of the first number of that great daily, when it was under the editorship of the novelist, who had W. H. Wills as his secretary. I preserve a very warm letter of appreciation from the successor of Dickens who at the time of the Newspaper Exhibition was in control of the "Daily News."

And yet although I now treasure those exhibitions among the memories I would not willingly

lose, as milestones, indeed, on my Dickensian road, the best of all occasions of the kind did not arise until the autumn of 1921. I cannot think that anything the future may hold for me as a collector can outshine the brilliant enterprise that marked the assembly at Devonshire House, Piccadilly, London, on November 30th, 1921, and in which I was privileged to share.

Bulwer Lytton's play, "Not So Bad as We Seem," was to be repeated, it will be recalled, in memory of the performance in the same magnificent chamber seventy years before—a performance to which Dickens himself contributed an actor's share. Among my Dickens letters is one to Leigh Hunt written from Devonshire House itself on Monday, May 12th, 1851. "My Dear Hunt," it goes, "the Duke is anxious that you should be asked to the Dress Rehearsal of Bulwer's Comedy, *here*, on Wednesday evening at a quarter before seven o'clock. I therefore write you this note. Please understand that I do so at the Duke's request and that it is his invitation." And elsewhere he wrote to one of his friends that he was at Devonshire House rehearsing all day for three days a week. The organisers of the entertainment called upon me, seeking permission to display my relics and souvenirs in the adjoining room on the same evening. Mrs. Alec Waley, a grand-daughter of the illustrious author, was untiring in her search, day after day, through my collection, and in the end she had selected manuscripts, rare editions, letters, prints and

autographs to an extent that amazed her—she could not believe that her grandfather had been the cause of such vast activity!

That memorable event is too near to us for any necessity to recall its details. It was, as Mr. and Mrs. Asquith remarked at the time, probably the chief Dickensian assembly the world has yet seen. The organisation was, I may safely say, perfect in its character. Our host, fittingly, was the novelist's son to whom I have already referred, and he was busily occupied all the evening in showing his own and my treasures to the guests. The praises and expressions of wonder that I overheard concerning my own contribution sounded like good music. I felt then, more than I had ever done, how right I had been to sacrifice all I did to keep my collection together, and to devote so much time and energy during the past thirty-eight years in up-building it. I recognised that I had accomplished a national duty, and my reflections since that day have been of the most satisfying character.

I think the charitable purpose of the Devonshire House gathering will have benefited greatly as its consequence, nor must that charitable purpose be forgotten. The performance was in aid of "David Copperfield's Library," a scheme inaugurated by the Children's Library Movement to provide a library for the poor and crippled children of the north-eastern part of London, to be housed at 13 Johnson Street, near Euston Station. These premises were once the

home of little Charles Dickens. Here he lived that life described in "David Copperfield," and summarised excellently by Mr. Frank Murray in his report of the Devonshire House entertainment. "A miserable and sordid life it was in many ways," wrote Mr. Murray in "The Clique," "for his luckless father had only just obtained release as a debtor from Marshalsea Prison, and times pressed very hard on the family. But here it was that young Charles Dickens discovered the solace of literature, in that 'small collection of books upstairs, to which I had access, and which nobody else ever troubled.' In that 'blessed little room' the budding genius found and devoured Smollett, Fielding, Goldsmith, 'Don Quixote,' 'Gil Blas,' and 'Robinson Crusoe,' and others of a 'glorious host': some of them no doubt strong meat for babes, but, as Forster says: 'They were a host of friends to him when he had no single friend.'"

That best of evenings came eventually to an end, as everything must, good or bad; and I felt a little sad when, in the cold, misty morning of December's dawn—if one may, by a pardonable exaggeration, call our time of breaking up the dawn—I shook hands and bade farewell to Sir Henry Dickens, Mrs. Waley, and scores of distinguished ladies and gentlemen to whom I had become, I hope, something more than a name. Since then my shop has been frequented more than ever by book-lovers of every type, from author, editor and artist, rich man and poor man,

though I do not remember seeing either beggar-man or thief. Those whom chance and circumstance have deprived of the perilous privilege of a cheque-book are, none the less, as warmly welcomed as are individuals whose purses are heavier than their hearts. I could not claim myself as a good Dickensian, would-be Cheeryble-spirited, had I remembered the ungracious distinction between man and man it were well that everyone of us forgot to make.

CHAPTER IX

Dickensiana (3). My Unpublished Collection of Letters. Dickens writes an Apology. A Message to John Leech on the Death of his Child. Financial and Domestic Sidelights. Words about Fathers and a Mother-in-law.

"THE gifted individual whom you will transmit to posterity." Thus wrote Charles Dickens, facetiously of himself to W. P. Frith on the eve of his first sitting for the famous portrait which now hangs at the South Kensington Museum. Whatever Frith may have given to posterity, Dickens himself has left a rich heritage entirely apart from that of the novels. I refer to his letters. Whether Dickens wrote a larger number of them in his lifetime than other distinguished men cannot be estimated: although in one of the notes I possess he confesses that he "can seldom write any letters that he likes to write, by reason of his writing fifty a day that he does not like to write." But it is certain that the correspondence of none had been preserved so lovingly and exhaustively as his. Fifty-two years have passed since he laid down his pen—he wrote several letters even during the day on which he

passed into unconsciousness,—and yet there are specimens coming to light even now. Surprise, almost amazement, was expressed on every side at the recent appearance in Sotheby's sale-room of more than six hundred unpublished letters which Charles Dickens wrote to Miss Coutts between 1839 and 1870 to her at her residence in the West End or at Holly Lodge, Highgate—"Holly Lodge," as he wrote in one letter, "from the outside looking beautiful (I have just been arranging a very small freehold not far from it, where my little child Dora, of the ill-omened name, is to lie under the sun instead of remaining in a vault: and where my many walks in that neighbourhood will take me, I suppose at last)." He is speaking of his daughter, the third child, who died at the age of eight months in 1851 and was buried in Highgate Cemetery. He had been playing with the little one, it will be remembered, just before he went out to preside at the annual dinner of the General Theatrical Fund. Soon after he left the house the child died suddenly in her nurse's arms. The sad news was communicated to him from Devonshire Terrace after his duties at the dinner were concluded.

I hardly need to say that the surprise and amazement manifested during the auction of the Burdett-Coutts library were not shared by Dickensians. Well do they know how such letters are constantly cropping up all over the world, remembering that even before the two volumes edited in 1880 by his sister-in-law and

his eldest daughter were published sufficient material had arrived from Dickens' correspondents for a supplementary volume. For my own part I believe the time is ripe for additional volumes of Dickens letters. In my possession at the present moment there are not less than two hundred which have never been reproduced.

Sometimes at the close of my busy day I find a serene pleasure in taking down those letters of mine and turning their hallowed leaves once more. I feel the spirit of their writer emanating therefrom, just as of old it was poured by him into them with all the lavishness and intensity which characterised those other pages he consciously wrote that the world might peruse them. Where, for example, has he shown a keener sense of frolic than in a passage I copy from the letter which he sent to Daniel Maclise from Broadstairs on September 2nd, 1840? It concerns a sculptor named Fletcher,[1] who had been staying near by:

"You know that *we* know Fletcher didn't go into the Sea that day at Ramsgate—I have corroborative evidence yesterday. Seeing me going into one of the machines he plucked up and said he'd have another. He had the next one. I undressed, went in, waited, still no Fletcher. Determined that he should not escape, I waded under the hood of his bath and seeing him standing with only his coat off, urged him to make

[1] An item in the Catalogue of Objects of Art of "C. Dickens deceased" sold by auction on July 9, 1870, is a "Marble Bust of Mr. Dickens, by Angus Fletcher." See also pp. 149-151.—EDITOR.

haste. In about five minutes more he fell heavily into the water, and, feeling the cold, set up a scream which pierced the air ! You never heard anything so horrible ! And then he splashed about like a fleet of Porpoises, roaring most horribly all the time, and dancing a maniac dance which defied description. Such a devil—such a bold, howling, fearful devil in buff I never beheld.

" He distinctly said afterwards, that being the *first* time etc. etc.

" He sketches here, gets beggars and idiots to sit to him on the sands and pier, dresses them in fragments of his own attire (all this in public) and rewards them with shillings for their pains. He makes acquaintance with old Prout as he sketches the Pier, endeavours to reconcile Miss Collins to Steevens (the rival bather), goes up into lofts where sails are made, and asks if they can find him half a dozen old apostles to come and sit in the same—and in short, commits all manner of absurdities. He is decidedly calmer, though, than he was in town, but he is as greedy as ever, and he is *here*, and don't say when he'll be anywhere else—there's the rub. . . ."

Then the writer adds, with that rich warm hospitality which everyone knew and loved him for in his lifetime : " Come down for a week, come down for a fortnight, come down for three weeks, come down for a month. Arrange to come—arrange to come. It's charming, and the house a most brilliant success—far more comfort-

able than anyone we've had." Again and again in the letters I have before me I find the same good offer of an open hearth. There is a note to John Leech, the famous artist of "Punch," giving him the alternative of either Tuesday or Saturday. "Choose which and tell me." And a rare treasure is his imitation command letter from Queen Victoria, with imitation signature, addressed to Clarkson Stanfield, R.A., at the Green Hill, Hampstead. "Victoria, by the Grace of God Queen Defender of the Faith," it runs, "to her trusty subjects John Forster and Charles Dickens. Greeting. This is to will and require you the said J. F. and C. D. to have in your safe keeping at No. 1 Devonshire Terrace on this present thirtieth day of January at half past five exactly, the body of Clarkson Stanfield, Royal Academician, and him in safe custody to keep and hold until the said Clarkson has taken his fill of certain meat, to wit hashed venison from America and has washed down the same with certain liquors to wit, fermented liquors, provided at the said Charles Dickens' proper cost and charge. Herein fail not at your peril.—Victoria. Countersigned Charles Dickens, John Forster." The "royal" signature is worthy of Jim the Penman.

. . . . . .

The creator of "Pickwick" was by no means unaware of the marketable value, even in those days, of his manuscripts and letters. The following is a brotherly note to his sister Fanny, written

in 1836 (when he was only twenty-four) from Furnival's Inn :

" Dear Fanny, Here's the autograph : Faithfully yours, Charles Dickens."

Not a word more. It bespeaks a knowledge of his own position that one must be thankful for : otherwise letters like the following would never have been preserved by their recipients, equally aware of what he was bestowing upon them :

Folkestone, Friday 17th August, 1855.

" My Dear Ward. . . . I am working, walking, and sea-watering here, and only going into the great Oven for Household Words purposes, and coming away again as soon as I have baked that weekly bread."

Or this, from Doughty Street, October 22nd, 1838 :

" My Dear Blanchard, I beg your pardon a hundred times. I have been so incessantly occupied, night and day, that I have not opened a letter this month until to-day. What on earth you or Mr. Costello can think of me, I can't conceive, but to induce *you* to think better I write this, and to induce *him* to do the same I have dispatched a note post-haste."

Or this, to an admiring stranger, a Mr. Samuel Collinson, from Gad's Hill Place, one Christmas Eve :

" Dear Sir, I beg to thank you cordially for the superb Pork Pie which graces the sideboard here

HABLOT K. BROWNE ("PHIZ")

Watercolour illustration for "Barnaby Rudge"

to-day. Let me send you in return all the good wishes of the blessed season and the time of year."

. . . . . .

"You should have seen the ruins of Covent Garden Theatre!"—Dickens is writing to his friend Macready in March, 1856.—"I went in, the moment I got to London—four days after the fire. Although the audience part, and the stage, were so tremendously burnt out that there was not a piece of wood half the size of a Lucifer match—though nothing whatever remained but bricks and smelted iron, lying on a great black desert—the Theatre still looked so wonderfully like its old self grown gigantic, that I never saw so strange a sight. The wall dividing the front from the stage still remained. . . . The arches that supported the stage were there, and the arches that supported the pit; and on the centre of the latter, lay something like a Titanic grape-vine that a hurricane had pulled up by the roots, twisted, and flung down there. This was the great chandelier. When the roof fell in it came down bodily, and all that part was like an old Babylonic pavement. . . . And I could make out the dresses in the Trovatore."

. . . . . .

Entirely delightful, entirely homely, is the communication addressed to Williams and Clapham, silversmiths. Although it is written from "Household Words" office on February 5th, 1856, its theme is domesticity with a vengeance: "Mr. Charles Dickens sends his compliments," it com-

mences : he begs that the little French present accompanying the letter shall be engraved with the inscription, " Charles Dickens Theodore Yates, from his Godfather, Charles Dickens," on the centre of the plate and round the cup. In the place left for the purpose on the handle of the spoon he wishes to have the child's initials, " C. D. T." Of his love of children I have spoken already. Perhaps it was with a premonition of his loss of the tiny Dora in the following year that he wrote as beautiful a letter of condolence with his friend John Leech as mortal man has ever penned. The date is March 9th, 1849, and it is written from Devonshire Terrace to Notting Hill Terrace :

" My dear Leech, I am deeply distressed (as are all here) to receive your melancholy news. All consolation is poor and feeble in the first blight of such an affliction, I know, but I cannot help sending you this word of affectionate sympathy and friendship.

" Try to think it better than the dear little child is spared from greater uneasiness and pain, and is at peace more than it could or would have been if she had lived a few years longer—to take a stronger hold upon you and her mother every day—and to leave a mightier blank in your hearts. Above all, try to remember that she has certainly gone to the inestimable happiness of God, and that she is among his angels evermore.

" Our loves to Mrs. Leech, with whom our thoughts are this morning. It is a great relief

to know that the end of your darling was so calm. It must be so to reward you—or will be, when you have thought a little more about it, I feel sure.

" I do not write as I would, for I really cannot say what I would. Believe me that all that is cordial, true and earnest—and full of sympathy and interest and affection—is what we feel here, and, that I am quite unable to express because we feel it so sincerely. Ever my dear Leech, Affectionately your friend. . . ."

The fresh glimpses into his private life which we obtain from this unpublished correspondence accentuate the homely sweetness of it in a way that makes them doubly valuable. There is a world of feeling for dumb animals in the next letter. He writes to his brother Alfred : " By a kind of fatality the servants among them lost that unfortunate dog on the day your letter arrived. He had grown very much, looked handsome, and was in high favour. He has not returned, nor can we get any news of him. I have determined never to keep another, be he who or what he may." Of course he could not help breaking his resolution. In the same missive he expresses anxiety about the baby, who " is still very thin and paler than she should be." To a friend in London he sends from Broadstairs " love from all out of prison to all in prison (I find that sentence to have an apostolic appearance)." We gather that Dickens' second boy is attached to the 42nd Highlanders and " in the thick of the Indian tussle." Always anxious about the welfare

of his friends he writes to Charles Kent, of "The Sun" newspaper: "I was much concerned to see your pencil-writing this morning, taking it at once as a sign of your being ill. I earnestly hope you will soon be well again." And he tells "my dearest Macready" (in 1853), that the latter's delightful note on the completion of "B. H." is "not the least of the joys of completing it." To Kent again, and to Charles Reade also, a note with his own signature attached is sent at his dictation by Miss Hogarth, describing the terrible railway accident in which he was concerned at Staplehurst in June 9th, 1865—five years to the day before his death and which, as George Eliot suspected in her correspondence at the time of the latter event, did much to hasten it.

Not the man to take an attack on himself with meekness was Charles Dickens. He resisted evil joyfully. An amusing letter lies before me written to his solicitor in W. H. Wills's hand and corrected with notes in his own. "My dear Ouvry," it begins, "most of the statements in Mr. Bowen May's letter are absolutely false. I never was threatened with legal proceedings by Kings & Co. I paid for the brougham I bought of them on the very day the money was due for it: I had cause of complaint against them, but I never refused to pay them one shilling for repairs which they demanded from me."

Evidently Kings & Co. had demanded a public apology in "All the Year Round," for the letter goes on: "All this has nothing to do with the

article of which they complain, nor are Messrs. Kings referred to in it, nor did the slightest communication in reference to Messrs. Kings ever pass between the writer and me. This plain fact can be proved by both of us, and under these circumstances Mr. Dickens positively refuses to gratify the desire of Messrs. Kings & Co., to get a large gratuitous advertisement through these pages."

Plain speaking was always his method, nor does he shirk it when he discovers himself to be in the wrong and sits down to make an apology. To a common friend of his and of a certain injured person he writes : " Since you forwarded me the enclosed letter from Mr. Joyce I have investigated its subject thoroughly, have recurred to it at intervals, again and again, and have taken time and pains to arrive at the truth."

His information in the first instance, he goes on to say, was positive, direct and plain. It was given to him with a full knowledge that he could consider it absolutely necessary to act upon it.

" But I am bound to say that it does not retain its direct and positive character, on being examined and re-examined. And setting (as I feel bound to do) Mr. Joyce's direct denial against it, and giving that denial the full weight that it is incumbent on one to attach to the word of a man whose truthfulness I have no right or reason to doubt, I must not hesitate to acquit Mr. Joyce of the offence I imparted to him. I therefore do so, freely, and I must beg to express

my regret to him through you, for having most unintentionally and innocently done him wrong."

No franker nor fuller withdrawal can be wished for. No wonder the man who made it was irresistible, even among his "enemies." This frankness is carried into all his relationships. To a brother he writes in 1850: "It gives me extraordinary pain to refuse you anything, but I cannot make up my mind to be security for the performance of so extensive a contract. I am uneasy in the lightest thought of bequeathing such an obligation to those of these nine children who may outlive me, if I bequeath anything. The responsibility would be most oppressive to me, always impending over my head. I cannot undertake it." Then, so tenderhearted is he withal, to lessen the sting of his refusal he adds that he has an invitation to his brother from Sir Edward Lytton to accompany him down for a stay at Knebworth the following month. "Your charges, of course, are my concern."

The anxiety as to money, hinted at in the foregoing letter, receives some confirmation, I think, through the four autographed deeds of instruction that have come into my hands in a roundabout manner from Messrs. Coutts & Company, the bankers (probably they were returned to the signatory in the ordinary way of business); one of them reads simply: "Sell my £1000 Indian Bonds," another "Purchase New 3 per cents in my name to make up £10,000 stock." One of

the best known and saddest facts about Dickens' life, of course, is that the public readings whose strain was the immediate cause of his death had been persisted in against all advice simply through his anxiety about the material welfare of his dependents.

Emphatic as Dickens was, whether in upholding his own attitude or retiring from it, he was not the man to waver when it came to the subject of, say, parents or mothers-in-law. " Your father, like so many I know, takes after the birds, and forgets his children as soon as they can fly. But that's not the worst than can happen. I know some men who would be heartily glad, with reason, if their fathers would forget them altogether, instead of having dim glimpses of recollection as yours has." The reference is to " poor Overs," a carpenter dying of consumption who nevertheless has his good qualities, as Dickens himself made known. In John Forster's " Life " is a letter in which the novelist describes how Overs suddenly asked for a pen and ink and paper and made up a little parcel that it was his last conscious effort to direct. His widow conveyed it to its destination. " I opened it last night," wrote Dickens, " It was a copy of his little book, in which he had written my name, ' with his devotion '."

As for mothers-in-law :

" Kate is out," he reports in another letter to somebody very different, " and I think it possible that she may not return until 5. . . . I want to see you very much, and to hear your account of all

that has been done since we went away. I hope I shall be able to do so to-morrow.

"I wish I could hear that you had been out to walk. You cannot think how much it would please me. *It is really time you made the effort.* If it were painful at first, you would very soon find ample consolation in the additional strength and cheerfulness which I am sure it would give you."

All this bluntness was aimed at the one and only mother-in-law he could not very well hope to avoid afterwards. For it was Mrs. Hogarth, who had become his own.

CHAPTER X

Dickensiana (4). More Unpublished Letters. How he suffered fools gladly or not gladly. Public Executions and People's Concerts. His kindness. His help to literary aspirants. His quarrel with Bentley. Who *was* the original Harold Skimpole?

"To Frank Stanfell Esquire, Royal Naval Hospital, Haslar, Gosport.—Dear Sir, I beg to inform you in reply to your letter of enquiry that the passage in question refers to a joke between myself and my friend Mr. Stanfield, the celebrated marine painter, whose name, in Captain Cuttle's mouth, changes accidentally to yours.—Faithfully yours, Charles Dickens."

Yes, indeed, the greatest portrayer of the egregious person in fiction had plenty of the kind in real life to suffer gladly, or to suffer not gladly. "Mr. Charles Dickens presents his compliments to Mr. Hoggins,"—so runs another letter in my collection, dated 1840; how his correspondent's name would appeal to him!—"and begs to inform him, in reply to his enquiry, that his works comprise three volumes of sketches, the Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby." Nothing else: Mr. Hoggins had not even the

famous autograph to console himself with. " Our curl-paper correspondent is a maniac, I suppose," writes Dickens from Dover to Sir Roderic Murchison in 1852, about another of these folk. " There seems to be an attraction in me for all the mad people. They *will* take me into their confidence. One woman in Scotland has left me such an amount of imaginary property that I think of retiring on it. The people on the Australian diggings ought to send you a few waggon-loads of gold as a testimonial."

But the more letters I turn over, the more ready am I to declare that no man in history has shown greater tenderness or consideration for those who, by the grace of God, walked in the path of lesser or iller fortune. The certificate in which he testifies to the good character of one of his servants at Tavistock House is composed as carefully as if it were to go into a chapter of his novels : he makes the prospective employer aware that the servant was not discharged, but " left in consequence of some bodily infirmity that required treatment." To the Lady Rose Fane, from Gad's Hill Place in July, 1863, a letter goes with the assurance that " it would have been a real pleasure for me to have voted for your protege, if I were free. But I unfortunately stand pledged to Fanny Kemble, who is exerting herself in behalf of another unfortunate person :—that is to say, a third, counting myself as one, your candidate as another, and hers as another." He makes the sorrowful comment how terrible it is to observe

that an interminable procession of incurable people want to get into the hospital the candidatures refer to. " I sometimes feel (unreasonably) as though it did more harm than good in disappointing so many and sheltering so few."

The Gallery of Illustrations, Regent Street, London, was evidently a headquarters for the organisation of a memorial fund on behalf of Douglas Jerrold's bereaved wife and children : for Dickens, who was actively connected with it, acknowledged from that address on July 11th, 1857, a cheque for two guineas subscribed towards the fund by Mr. A. Dickers, senior, and enclosing four stall tickets, " two admitting to Mr. Thackeray's lecture announced in the accompanying printed report, two to my own reading." But he thinks it right to inform Mr. Dickers that " Mr. Jerrold has not left his family in want. He was in the course of making a good provision for them, and would have succeeded in doing so if his life had been spared a little longer."

" I regret that I have not the remotest influence with any daily or weekly newspaper," he writes to Madame Sala from Twickenham Park in 1838. " Not the slightest. I am always most careful to solicit no favours from such gentlemen connected with them as I happen to know personally, and I need not, I am sure, point out to you—situated as I am—the necessity of my adopting this course." The reader is reminded of the famous passage in the " Letters " about the " vile, blackguard, and detestable newspapers, so filthy

and bestial that no honest man would admit them into his home for a scullery door-mat." But Dickens does not rest at that negative answer to Madame Sala in her "very severe misfortune," a bad illness. He goes on to say that he has received a promise from his friend Mr. Forster cheerfully to do anything she wishes him to do in the "Examiner," or—if there should not be time for that—in the "Morning Chronicle." "He is very desirous of serving you by any means in his power, and you may fully depend on his doing so. For myself, I can only say that if you will point out to me any mode by which, either now or at any future time, I can advance your interests or be of service to you, I pray you to command me. I do not say this as a mere compliment, but in all truth and sincerity. And I hope you will let me know before long that you have read this note with your own eyes, and written me a short bulletin in reply with your own fingers."

This letter and the effort at service that lies behind it are typical. Already well known is the supreme instance, of course, that of his letter to Wilkie Collins offering, if the author of "The Woman in White" should continue to feel unwell, to come from Paris to London, to complete for him the novel he was engaged upon, "so like you that no one should find out the difference!" I might easily fill a volume with extracts from such other communications of the kind as I have had the privilege of acquiring. For my own part I shall never tire of this kind of *Dickensiana*, and

I am certain that many another admirer of his will not tire any more readily. Nevertheless, I must resist the temptation to refer to the others, beyond two which are so dissimilar from each other and from Madame Sala's that they cannot be passed by. The first is delightfully practical. " I should like your letter to the Honorary Secretary of the Manchester Athenæum better if it were more direct," he writes to Miss Kelly, 73 Dean Street, Soho, on August 15th, 1848. " I don't think going, like the old rider, ' round and round the horse without touching the horse,' is a good course to adopt towards anyone, but with a plain man of business, of all people, it is a very bad one, and quite certain not to succeed. Surely you could write plainly, and say that you consider yourself entitled to the first scale of remuneration for such things, whatever it be, and that you would feel much obliged if he would tell you what it is.

" If you write to these gentlemen about the favour of the public, and so forth," he continues, " they will get an impression—be sure of it—that you are a difficult person to deal with, or to hold to a point, and that will be fatal to your design in the outset. Business, plain straightforward business, is the only quality that will serve you in correspondence of this kind. Anything else is a rock ahead, and you'll go to pieces on it."

It is not generally known that Dickens had a share in inventing the title of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton's " Not So Bad as We Seem." Here

again, in a letter to an authoress of his circle, we find him endeavouring to help towards a suitable title—for a book of oriental travel. In page 194 in the second volume of the "Letters" is an earlier note to the same lady, in which he thinks he has "found a first-rate title to your book—'Arabian Days and Nights'." But this is evidently not satisfactory, for in the letter I have before me he says: "It is very difficult to suggest another title. What such a book wants in its title it wants in itself—the air of novelty derivable from the things being seen and thought about, from some fanciful station.

"Of the three titles I send, I recommend the first: with the addition of a line from Love's Labour Lost. . . .

'Rays from the East.'
'Oriental Beauties.'
'Oriental Features.'

The title I recommend would stand

'Rays from the East.'
'At the first opening of the gorgeous East.'
—Shakespeare."

. . . . . .

Public Executions and People's Concerts: there is not necessarily any connection between these, nor is there in the present reference, except that I possess two letters on the two subjects written by Charles Dickens practically on the same day in 1856. To James Gresham he sends word that his opinions on Public Executions were expressed

in two letters addressed to the editor of the "Times" newspaper, immediately after the execution of the Mannings, husband and wife. "I am far too busy to repeat them here, but it is the less necessary by reason of their having undergone no kind of modification."

There is much more than a discussion of People's Concerts in the long and characteristic letter which he wrote to Mr. Molyneux, of the People's Concerts Committee, St. Martin's Hall, Long Acre, London. Incidentally it contains wise words on working-class associations of every kind, which are still timely. It would seem that Dickens was invited to preside at a gathering in connection with the movement referred to, for after assuring Mr. Molyneux that he feels a "real interest" in the project, he regrets that his time is at present so fully occupied that he is obliged to forego all such engagements. "If I were to make an exception in this case, I should immediately be reminded of conditional promises, and overwhelmed by a flood of correspondence, for which I have no leisure."

What a surprise the next part of the letter must have been for Mr. Molyneux! "With this sufficient reason for avoiding public meetings while my own avocations occupy my time and attention, it is scarcely necessary, perhaps to hint at any other. But in my desire to be quite frank with you and the friends you represent, I will add that even if I had been more at leisure I doubt very much whether I should not, on consideration,

have requested you to excuse my compliance with your proposal. I am not at all clear in the first place that I have a right to assume such a position in reference to an entertainment in the arrangements of which I have no power, and in the direction of which I assume no responsibility. In the second place, I most earnestly desire to see a working man in that position—one of your own body—personally identified with the merit of the scheme and the working of it out. The recognition of such a President would have a meaning in it, and a becoming expression of self-reliance, which I think would be as agreeable to many thousands as it would be to me. I confess to having an uneasy feeling in all such cases, that the term 'self-supporting' includes, of right, much more than the mere money question: and I wish your Society would be self-supporting in the much higher sense of putting its own men and its own members in its high places. If I were then invited as its guest, to take my place among the general auditory, listen to the music, and bear my testimony to the humanising and improving influence of such good efforts, through such channels as I have open to me, I should respond with great pleasure."

. . . . . .

If the fascination of Dickens lies, and it does truly lie, in the man no less than in the author, the author is still the greater part of the man. Thus, ere I gather my treasured letters together, I linger for the final and best moment on those

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK (After HOGARTH): The Rake's Progress. No. 1

which, if they do not throw any new light upon the creator of some of the world's greatest novels, at least help to focus that glamorous figure more clearly. Here, to commence with, is one brief note to our old friend, George Cruikshank from Devonshire Terrace, dated 21st November, 1843, in which he writes that he is finishing a little book for Christmas, and contemplates a bolt that he might do so in peace. "As soon as I have done I will let you know, and then I hope we shall take a glass of grog together: for I have not seen you since I was grey."

"I have just given three cheers over the end of the number," he writes, at an earlier period to Mr. Hicks, the printer for Bradbury and Evans, from Furnivals Inn. He is referring to the "Pickwick Papers." "I now forward it. If you can spare a boy, be good enough to send him in about an hour's time for the proof (of another number), which I have not yet had time to correct. If he doesn't come, I shall conclude you can't spare him, and will send it." He delighted in giving an atmosphere of mystery to the loans of early proofs that he made to his friends. Always he demanded that their perusal should be done in secret. "Keep it darkest of the dark," he writes to Charles Kent, in sending him a proof of a Christmas number. "Don't hurry: but when you have done with it please return it to me here, marked Private." And I find, along with the letter, a large blue envelope marked "Private" boldly in the corner, with Dickens'

signature. "This is a secret yet, of course," he says in enclosing proofs to Serjeant Talfourd. To Mr. Macready he sends an early proof of a Christmas Story also, belonging to another year. "The second chapter is by Wilkie Collins: all the rest is by me. I hope you may like it." The date of the letter is December 1st, 1857. To glance at these Christmas Numbers of "Household Words" and "All the Year Round" is very illuminating. That just referred to is in three chapters on "The Perils of Certain English Prisoners and their Treasure in Women, Children, Silver and Jewels." The first section, written by Dickens himself, is entitled "The Island of Silver Store." Collins's chapter is "The Prisoner in the Woods," and Dickens' other chapter, "The Rafts on the River." There is nothing to show that the public were made aware of the collaboration.

The letter to Serjeant Talfourd, written on February 4th, 1839, has several points of interest. He refers to "the little book, which I hope will prove among the most interesting I shall ever leave to those for whom I work." Was it "Oliver Twist"? Then he had reason to transfer his hope. "As you will come fresh upon the subject," he continues, "I am curious to see how the idea of the first MS. of my projected work strikes you. I enclose you the proof. . . . It is the first article that I want you to read. The blanks are for woodcuts." It was "Nicholas Nickleby," this time.

" Besides polishing the murder minutely every day this next week, I must try to hammer out an Uncommercial—though I have not the faintest idea of a subject." This he writes in 1868 to W. H. Wills at " All the Year Round " office, and Wills adds a note in pencil to indicate that the murder referred to is that of Nancy by Sikes—yes, even though " Oliver Twist " had been written and published thirty years earlier. Dickens polished up the old stories right to the end; that is, if he had them in his mind for some public reading. Another letter (1863), indicates that he had been asked by Mr. Edward Levy, the father of the present Lord Burnham, to contribute to the " Daily Telegraph." He left the letter lying unanswered for more than two months! To Mr. W. Jerdan, when he was much younger and sprightlier, Dickens writes mystifyingly from 48 Doughty Street: " I want to see you about the Wictim, and also to ask you a question bearing reference to the ' Hanninversary '." This follows a protest, concerning some " Bentley's Miscellany " transaction, which reads: " It is really unfair of you to charge any mistakes in your last paper on me. I exerted myself about it at the very last moment when there was not time to take it away from the printers at your own special request. I can have no object but to please the contributors to the best of my power—more especially yourself—and this is very discouraging indeed."

The amount of personal effort with which Charles Dickens invested his duties as editor, first

of " Bentley's Miscellany," and later (in these instances with the valuable help of Mr. Wills) of " Household Words " and " All the Year Round," never ceases to amaze me as I think of it. He grudged no trouble : Forster tells how he would spend as much as four hours in licking a beginner's manuscript into shape ! There were no typewriters in those days, and, judging by the refusals of MSS. which I have seen in his own handwriting, no printed rejection slips ! To the Mr. Jerdan lately introduced into our pages, he wrote from Furnival's Inn : " I inclose you a proof of 'John Richardson ' which you will perhaps have the goodness to revise and return to me directly. I have been compelled by great press of matter to cut it a little here and there, but I hope you will not think the effect of the paper impaired thereby. I have been obliged to perform the same kind office to my own articles, and was last month at the very greatest disadvantage." No mutilating editor could have a more disarming way with him.

He regrets, to Mr. W. H. Hughes, that he cannot accept the obliging offer of a tale for the " Miscellany," simply because there is no space left. He adds a piece of free advice on another matter : " If you offered your romance to Mr. Bentley or any other bookseller accompanied by a letter with your real name and address, I have little doubt that it would be carefully perused and promptly attended to. I need scarcely say that I can be of no assistance to you in this respect, and

that the manuscript would be judged on its own merits. I believe this is a very common course of proceeding, and often a successful one. . . ."

There is a touch of dryness in that final remark. And small wonder, if he was often harassed into taking on the role (unpaid) of literary adviser.

And now for the bitter close of Charles Dickens' association with "Bentley's Magazine." I copy out a letter to George Cruikshank, written from 48 Doughty Street:

"My dear Sir, Although my feelings were so much excited this morning by Mr. Bentley's treatment (rendered doubly insulting by the proofs received from the printers last night), that I could not refrain from hinting at the determination at which I had arrived, I forebore to announce it openly until I had taken a little time to consider and deliberate upon it, maturely.

"I now write to say that you are released from any further trouble in the negociation regarding Oliver Twist, for I have ceased to be the editor of the Miscellany."

. . . . . .

The original of the above letter, by the way, has a price on it of £72. So curious, however, are the ups and downs of book and manuscript commerce that the next letter, with which I shall regretfully close this chapter and my *Dickensiana*, is valued at £18, although, as will be seen, its importance would be difficult to exceed. It is written to Mr. John Darlington, of Whitley Cottage, Bradford, and it speaks of "poor Angus

CHARLES DICKENS AS EDITOR.

Reproduced opposite is a peculiarly interesting example of Dickens' severity as an editor. The illustration shows a proof sheet of part of an article by Charles Dickens, Junior, written for *All the Year Round*. The article has been edited by the writer's father, and so extensively that in its final form the text is almost entirely different from that originally composed.

The Text as originally written by Charles Dickens, Junior:

-posed "drunkery" was a harmless and innocent affair enough. But, although the vote passed without further opposition from Mr. Alderman Lusk, it is probable that that gentleman was not satisfied. He was, probably, pleased that he had liberated his mind. He had spoken up like a man. The iniquity was not to be perpetrated without his protest. But it must have been unpleasant for him to find that the state of things he so much deprecated had for years been going on in this very Victoria Park, and in another called Battersea, although in tents on the cricket-fields, and not in more permanent drunkeries. Of course, the honourable gentleman was ignorant of the facts of this particular case. That is by no means surprising. But that even the honourable gentleman should have been ignorant of the general state of the case is curious.

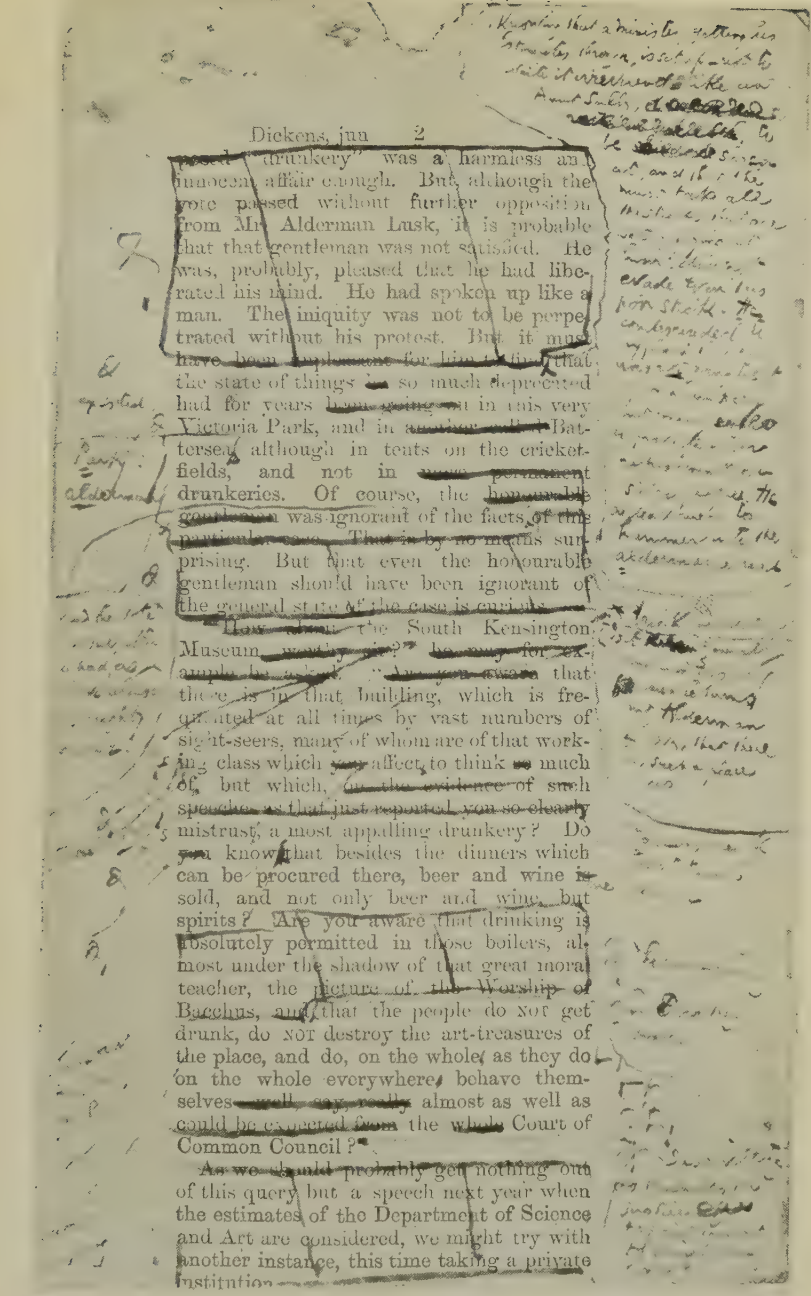
"How about the South Kensington Museum, worthy sir?" he may for example be asked. "Are you aware that there is in that building, which is frequented at all times by vast numbers of sight-seers, many of whom are of that working class which you affect to think so much of but which, on the evidence of such speeches as that just reported, you so clearly mistrust, a most appalling drunkery? Do you know that besides the dinners which can be procured there, beer and wine is sold, and not only beer and wine, but spirits? Are you aware that drinking is absolutely permitted in those boilers, almost under the shadow of that great moral teacher, the picture of the Worship of Bacchus, and that the people do NOT get drunk, do NOT destroy the art-treasures of the place, and do, on the whole, as they do on the whole everywhere, behave themselves well, say, really almost as well as could be expected from the whole Court of Common Council?"

As they should probably get nothing out of this query but a speech next year when the estimates of the Department of Science and Art are considered, we might try with another instance, this time taking a private institution.

The Text as finally corrected by Charles Dickens, Senior:

, knowing that a Minister getting his estimates through, is set up—not to write it irreverently—like an Aunt Sally to be shyed at, and that he must take all the sticks that are set aflying at him, did not evade even this poor stick. He condescended to explain that he was *not* going to set up a Drunkery, but merely to provide sober refreshments for sober people. He endeavoured to hammer into the Aldermanic head that the state of things so much deprecated had for years existed in this very Victoria Park and in Battersea Park although in tents on the cricket-fields, and not in brick and mortar drunkeries. Of course, the Alderman was ignorant of the facts and the vote passed after he had as above released his mighty mind.

Is it generally known in Finsbury, which returns Mr. Alderman Lusk, that there is such a place as the South Kensington Museum? Have his meek constituents heard that there is in that building, which is frequented at all times by vast numbers of sightseers, many of whom are of that working class which one of our Finsbury M.Ps. affects to think much of (at election time), but which he calumniously mistrusts, a most appalling drunkery? Do they know down in Finsbury that besides the dinners which can be procured there, beer and wine are sold, and not only beer and wine, but spirits? And do they know that the people do not get drunk, do not destroy the art treasures of the place; and do—on the whole as they do on the whole everywhere—behave themselves almost as well as the Court of Common Council? If so, will they do themselves the justice to point this out to their shining light?



Dickens, jun 2

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CHARLES DICKENS AS EDITOR

(See opposite page)

Fletcher, to whom, by a relative's evidence, the originals of Harold Skimpole in "Bleak House" were shifted from Leigh Hunt.

"I feel truly obliged to you," Dickens begins (the letter is dated "London Sunday Twenty Third March 1862"), "for your kind letter giving me the sad details of poor Angus Fletcher's death. I had seen the announcement in the obituary of The Times, and had been hoping to receive some private intelligence on the subject.

"It is a mournful end, but only so to us, for it would seem that he could have known very little, if anything, of the closing circumstances by which he was surrounded. I think I have always had an impression that the poor dear fellow would die in some strange way—I have known him to come and go so unaccountably that I have never considered him quite fit to be trusted with himself when he had the least uneasiness or emotion on his mind.

"Probably you and I knew him better, through a good quarter of a century, than any other of his friends ever did. He was a most affectionate and gentle creature, and I have many a time had occasion to observe how easily his erratic tendencies could be held in check by a few words of considerate reasoning from those whom he loved. No doubt this was your experience too."

The letter is accompanied by a testimony dated March 27th, 1903, from 17 Dulwich Road, London, signed by a Mr. Fred A. Darlington,

and stating that Angus Fletcher was a friend of both Charles Dickens and John Darlington " and the individual from whom Harold Skimpole was drawn in ' Bleak House '." The testifier claims that he himself remembered Angus Fletcher, " Who was, in fact, my eldest brother's godfather."

. . . . . .

So do we take once again our leave of great company. A few pages about some remarkable artists not unconnected with these past four chapters, and then we meet with another of my cherished memories, that of " R. L. S." The step from *Dickensiana* to *Stevensoniana*, when we come to take its measure, will not seem a very long one, so well-loved was the older man, so well-loved the younger.

CHAPTER XI

Dickens' Illustrators. Sir Luke Fildes and After. The Famous Baxter Colour Prints; and the Tragedy of George Baxter.

The student of Charles Dickens' novels or correspondence does not proceed far without becoming aware of other gifted men whose names must always be remembered in his company. I speak of his illustrators, from Seymour to Fildes. The contributions of Seymour, that early, ill-fated artist of "Pickwick," have an especial interest, his sordid life and its tragic sequel being facts as sad in the annals of art as are Chatterton's struggles and final departure in literary history. Seymour's death led to a brief experiment in a few numbers of "Pickwick." A draughtsman named Buss was commissioned to follow him, but the drawings he executed were considered to be vulgar and of indifferent merit. Not all of them were used, and even the two accepted were replaced by the plates, now more familiar, that "Phiz" supplied in succession to Buss the luckless. Dickens was on his honeymoon when Buss's drawings reached the publishers; otherwise none

of them would have ever seen the light. The publishers had no time to submit them to Dickens, transit in those days being so much slower. Immediately the author of " Pickwick " was able to take a hand in the affair, he caused an advertisement to be inserted in the press for a new artist. Thackeray and Leech applied, but so did a draughtsman who signed himself " Nemo." Dickens had the discrimination to prefer the latter, who turned out to be the great " Phiz."

" Phiz," otherwise Hablot K. Browne, proved to be the most popular of all the Dickens illustrators. My readers will find themselves more indebted than ever to the genius of " Phiz." The five beautiful water colours here reproduced, in illustration of " Nicholas Nickleby " and " Barnaby Rudge " are striking evidence that Dickens was not only assisted by one who was an industrious, prolific and versatile illustrator, but undoubtedly a great artist and humorist. The drawings were so greatly admired when I exhibited them at the Devonshire House festival in November, 1921, that I am encouraged to give their replicas in the present volume : and as they have hitherto been unpublished, I think they will be a welcome surprise to the ever-increasing brotherhood of Dickensians.

What hot-tempered and independent fellows those Victorian artists seem to have been ! Hablot Browne lost a fortune merely through a pride whose chief quality was its hastiness. The unfortunate story was told to me in 1884 by his own

daughter, Miss M. A. Browne, who had sent me from time to time for many months a parcel of her father's drawings, and also called often and talked about the old Dickens days. During the five or six years after Browne's death, I purchased about two thousand five hundred drawings from her, all that she inherited.

In 1859 the novelist had written to "Phiz" complaining about the weakness of his illustrations to "A Tale of Two Cities." Browne was a very sensitive-natured man, and the criticism hit him sadly. So much to heart did he take it that he made a bonfire in his garden at Hove there and then, piling on to it every sketch and letter relating to Dickens that he possessed. Thus were destroyed what even then had become almost untold riches.

From that day Browne's luck began to decline. It was during this period of decline that he executed a good many of the drawings which came into my possession. There were unique sets of them, like that entitled "The Greedy Pig," fascinating to collectors and antiquaries. He made a subject of anything that occurred to him, and his genius was always to be traced in the result. He became very reserved and shunned company. His daughter told me that his right thumb became so paralysed that the pencil had to be tied to it. Writs and summonses for debt were made against him, though I do not believe they were ever served: for in those days such legal documents required to be served "on the person," and his house-door was never opened,

all his work for publishers being called for and handed through the railings.

. . . . . .

Although Buss, as we have seen, failed to maintain his position as artist to "Pickwick," his work as an illustrator is not to be lightly dismissed. His coloured plates, inspired in other quarters than Dickens, are distinctive: for many years I have collected them, and I still welcome additions to my portfolio. Of George Cruikshank and William Makepeace Thackeray—the latter, of course, merely a would-be illustrator of his great contemporary's novels before he discovered how ably he himself could write—I have already spoken; of others, like Frank Stone, I have no knowledge or purpose; and among the direct illustrators, that is, those commissioned by Dickens himself, it only remains for me to recall John Leech and Sir Luke Fildes.

In a letter written from the office of "All the Year Round" on January 16th, 1870, the author of "Edwin Drood" begged to thank the young Mr. Fildes for the highly meritorious and interesting specimens of his art that he had done him the kindness to submit. He (Dickens) returned them therewith, after having examined them with the greatest pleasure. "I am naturally curious," he continues, "to see your drawing from 'David Copperfield,' in order that I may compare it with my own idea. In the meantime, I can honestly assure you that I entertain the greatest admiration for your remarkable powers."

That letter was the beginning of an important association, broken rudely by the novelist's death. At the very week-end after the fatal June 9th, 1870, Mr. Fildes was to have accompanied Dickens to Gad's Hill to be introduced to the neighbourhood in which were laid many of the scenes in that last, that uncompleted book. The two men had already met, however. During one of the many talks Sir Luke and I have had in my shop-parlour he has recalled how vividly he remembers Dickens as a dandy in his dress. A little while back I sent a request to Sir Luke that he would autograph for a customer one of the valuable prints of his famous drawing, "The Empty Chair, June 10, 1870," done originally for the "Illustrated London News" of the following week, and creating such a sensation that the issue was sold out within an hour or two of publication. He obliged me gladly, sending me a kind message, dated May 2nd, 1922: "Dear Mr. Spencer, With much pleasure. I hope you are well? I will come and see you some day soon."

John Leech lived much earlier than Sir Luke Fildes, of course, being a contemporary of Mark Lemon, George Henry Lewes, and Dickens himself. His father was landlord of an old coffee house on Ludgate Hill. Leech was a personal friend of the great novelist as well as illustrator of "The Christmas Carol," and part-illustrator of the other Christmas books, for he joined Dickens and the Hon. Spencer Lyttleton

in a little trip to Paris in 1851, during which, as Dickens wrote to his wife, they "got on famously and were very facetious."

My connection with the family of this famous "Punch" artist (who died before Dickens, at Kensington in 1864) began in rather a curious manner. About thirty years ago a tall, handsome gentleman came into my shop, accompanied by a young lady, both being completely unknown to me. The gentleman asked if I would care to purchase a book he held in his hand. It was a first edition of Charles and Mary Lamb's "Tales from Shakespeare," in two volumes, half-calf, dated 1807. I replied that I certainly would, and enquired what sum he demanded for it. He said: "I have no idea of its proper value, but I was recommended to come to you by Dr. Richard Garnett, of the British Museum."

Now an answer like that places a bookseller in an awkward situation. In offering pounds for a book where the owner expects shillings, and in this instance I would need to offer pounds as a fair price, he is so astonished that his mind goes arguing within itself like this: "If this bookseller offers so much my volume must be worth so much more. I'll try somewhere else." And off the man goes, and I lose my chance. Whereas, did I offer just sufficient to make him feel neither scared nor astonished, all would be well, and the book in my possession.

Therefore, I considered to myself for a moment, not knowing exactly what to offer. I knew the

book was well worth twenty pounds, but he would have been driven into some other bookseller's arms had he heard me tell him so. It was not in my heart to make old Dr. Richard Garnett's acquaintance anything but a fair offer, and good fortune came as a consequence. I said, "fifteen pounds," and he said in reply:

"Well, Mr. —— I forget your name—Mr. Spencer, if you had said *two* pounds I should have taken it! My name is Mr. Gage. As you have dealt so handsomely, and as I see a book by the side of me that John Leech illustrated, I may as well tell you that I happen to know Leech's family very well; they have a considerable number of water colour and pencil sketches by him, which you may be interested to see."

I answered that I would be obliged to him if he would mention my name to the family and intimate that I was prepared to buy any of Leech's work they cared to dispose of. The consequence was that I purchased a great number of valuable examples. The family's association with me became so pleasant for us all that they eventually made me a gift of the copy of Leech's "Comic History of England," which the artist gave to his daughter Rose. Her name is inscribed on the title page in his handwriting, and it is one of my cherished possessions.

. . . . . .

The artists who have been inspired by the books of Charles Dickens to "extra-illustrating" them, as it is called, are legion. Only the illustrators

of Shakespeare can have outnumbered them. Of those in whose work I am specially interested from the collector's standpoint is F. W. Pailthorpe. I have in my possession twenty-four plates to "Pickwick" executed by him in 1882; the first proof copy of twenty-one plates, with artist's presentation inscription, to "Oliver Twist," done in 1885; and a coloured set of twenty-one etchings for "Great Expectations," with their proofs on Japanese paper in the same year. A hundred copies of each set were made, and published by Robson and Karslake. They are extremely rare and valuable to-day. In his early days Pailthorpe was an apprentice to George Cruikshank. Dr. Truman once told me that he reproduced some of Cruikshank's work so cleverly that Truman said: "I'll show this impression to Mr. Cruikshank, and I'll wager he will sign it as his." "Yes," said Cruikshank, when he saw it, "that's my work," and he attached his signature to the plate in the belief that it actually was!

I remember Pailthorpe very well. He was an extraordinary character, the best, I am inclined to say, of all those best fellows I have ever met. Almost might he have stepped out of a Dickens story. During the last years of his life he was employed continuously for me at the "extra-illustration" work. I have preserved a letter from him from West Ham to myself in 1909, written in an exquisite script: "I shall mount a Buss and be with you on Tuesday—if that will

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK (After HOGARTH): The Rake's Progress. No. 2

suit you ?—and bring the stuff with me. Hoping that this will find you and your lovely family well." Our relations were not at all business-like—how can anybody think of business in the face of a Dickens character come back to earth ! Indeed they were thoroughly homely, for he had the free use of my house, and while I was busy he would find his way upstairs. There, at the end of my work, I would find him in the kitchen, in conversation with the mother of the boys and girls he loved so much to play with, and then we would all sit down comfortably to a cup of tea.

. . . . . .

I wonder how many folk of the present generation who are not specialists remember the famous Baxter colour-prints ? For my own part, I began to collect them when I was a schoolboy. It is sad to reflect that the gifted artist, George Baxter, died actually in want of a crust of bread : he lies these sixty years at Forest Hill in a pauper's grave.

Baxter was, frankly, too thoroughly conscientious for this sinful world. He was so conscientious that he could not make a living. I have known one of his old workmen, who told me that his master was in the habit of paying four sovereigns a pound for his colour vermilion, although he could only afford to buy an ounce or so at a time. He refused to take any cheaper substitute, although he could have obtained it for a hundredth of the price.

Baxter's prints were characterised by a superb finish. Artist after artist has tried to discover the

secret which Baxter alone knew, and when he died the secret went with him. If you moisten your finger and touch a print with it the impression of the finger remains. I once asked Baxter's nephew if he had any notion of what his uncle used to achieve that particular finish. " Neither I nor any of the family have ever been able to find out," the nephew answered. " But one thing we do know. It was not the white of an egg." He also confessed that he knew as little as anyone else how the colours were registered. They were done for " posterity." You might boil them and they will not lose anything.

One of Baxter's most famous prints is that entitled " The Bride," commonly known as " The Small Bride," as sweet and dainty a portrait of a little woman as one could wish to see. Under the picture are the following lines :

" For ever thine whate'er this heart betide :
For ever mine where'er our lot be cast :
Fate, that may rob us of all wealth beside,
Shall leave us love, till life itself be past.
—' Le Souvenir,' 1848."

" The Bride " is one of five plates gathered together as a volume and published at either half-a-crown or five shillings—I do not remember exactly. The cost of production was within fourpence of the sum charged, each plate requiring nine colour printings ! " The Bride " is the nearest approach ever made to an ivory miniature. When a reproduction comes into the market it

is eagerly sought after, and the price to-day is twenty-five pounds a print.

Strangely enough, the vogue of Baxter originated neither in London nor in America, but in the English midlands ! When I first offered the prints for sale I classified them in two lots, the smaller kind that brought three or four shillings each, and the larger ones that realized eight to fifteen shillings. They sold very slowly in those days, so slowly that in 1900 I imagine I had ten thousand specimens ! But I have not anything like that number now. They have steadily increased in favour among discriminating collectors since that time, and it seems to me that as public appreciation of the deeper refinements develops, more and more people will be drawn by these marvellous prints. And not the prints alone, for Baxter did some charming work on the old Crystal Palace needleboxes, so eagerly coveted by the mid-Victorian damsels, so completely forgotten by the sophisticated tennis racquet- and golfstick-owning maiden of our own time.

At the height of Baxter's popularity (and it was of the kind that must not be confused with prosperity, the artist, as I have said, contributing so much to the piece of work he issued that all possible chance of profit on it was destroyed), several other London art firms saw a way in which Baxter might be exploited. They approached him and sought permission to produce plates in association with his name. He unwisely granted a licence to several firms sanctioning this association,

and they immediately began to turn out the charming little prints in vast numbers. *They produced and sold them more cheaply*, with the inferior colours, but without any difference that the mere buyer across the counter could detect. How trashy these imitations appear to-day !—so much more carelessly were they printed, as far as the vital points were concerned, that the dainty touches on the lips and eyelids, for example, were entirely neglected. But the public, as I say, did not realize that they were buying inferior prints for their money. They never do. Almost in a day after poor Baxter granted these fatal licences he lost the whole of his business.

CHAPTER XII

Robert Louis Stevenson and how he came to sit in my parlour. Nurse Cunningham and how she helped me. Early Stevenson Pamphlets that are little gold-mines. How I nearly published his Poems. And some new relics.

ALWAYS I remember the night when Robert Louis Stevenson came into my shop. Never before nor since that occasion did I meet him, although as a customer he acquired Scottish pamphlets from time to time through the agency of my catalogue : and once, in a letter from him, I was delighted to read the following :

" I thank you, Spencer, courteous chap,
For many a volume quaint and neat,
Which would not have been mine perhap,
Had I not known New Oxford Street."

It was in the year 1885 that he made his one call on me, during a break on a journey from Edinburgh to Bournemouth. The day had been very wet, and he sat down wearily in a chair in my shop parlour to examine some further pamphlets he had enquired about. He told me that one of his shoes leaked, and I suggested that

he should take it off and allow it to be dried, at the same time giving him a little brandy and water to keep off a cold.

I thought it would interest Mr. Stevenson to see a catalogue I had just issued, in which the first edition of his "New Arabian Nights" (two volumes, published in 1882) was listed at 8s. 6d. in the original cloth. A moment earlier he had been depressed by the sight on my shelves of some sixty copies of the book, a library surplus which I had purchased from Mudies for a shilling a volume. I can see now the change on his face as he looked up from the catalogue.

"But, Mr. Spencer," he said wistfully, "no-one asks about first editions of my books, do they?"

Poor Stevenson's lack of self-confidence was never justified, for the book gradually increased in price, moving to four guineas, to six, to eight. At the sale of Colonel Prideaux's library I gave £47 for a copy. But neither R. L. S. nor I, as we sat there talking on that rainy night, ever thought I should live to see the day when, knowing how limited is the edition, I had to bid £101, as I did in 1921, for a book which, thirty-seven years earlier, I had priced at 8s. 6d. A record experience, surely, in a bookseller's own lifetime!

. . . . . .

Neither the mother nor father of Stevenson did I ever see. But among my private possessions is what the elder Stevenson used to call his "pocket treasure," a daguerrotype of R. L. S.'s mother,

with a lock of her hair and another from the head of the famous author. Old Mr. Stevenson carried it about with him to the day of his death.

I corresponded a good deal with Stevenson's mother, and purchased some remainder copies from her of "The Charity Bazaar," a leaflet edited by her son in 1868 in aid of a bazaar in his native town. Mrs. Stevenson wrote to me that she was about to pay a visit to Samoa, and if she could persuade her son to sign the copies of the leaflet, would I pay a guinea each for them? I promised to do so, and was agreeably surprised when she forwarded them to me, autographed by Stevenson with his full name.

To the old lady I am indebted for my association with Alison Cunningham, Stevenson's first nurse, to whom he gave presentation copies of his books as they were published, always with a characteristic and charming inscription. The oldest of the volumes is "An Inland Voyage" (1878), and in it Stevenson has written the following:

"My dear Cummy:—If you had not taken so much trouble with me all the years of my childhood this little work would never have been written. Many a long night you sat up with me when I was ill. I wish I could hope, by way of return, to amuse a single evening for you with my little book! But whatever you may think of it, I know you will continue to think kindly of

The Author."

At the time of my introduction to Alison Cunningham in the year 1897, she was terribly pressed for money—the reason of which I learned later—and she offered me the set of nine presentation volumes. Thus came into my possession the following unique editions along with "An Inland Voyage":

"Travels with a Donkey," 1879, with inscription "To Alison Cunningham, from the Author" in his autograph.

"A Child's Garden of Verses," 1885, with inscription "Alison Cunningham, Bournemouth, 11th March, 1885, R. L. S." in his autograph. (The book was dedicated to "Alison Cunningham, from her boy R. L. S.")

"Kidnapped," 1886, with inscription, "Alison Cunningham, from her boy, the author, Skerryrose, July 16th, 1886," in his autograph.

"Underwoods," 1887, with inscription "Alison Cunningham, from her laddie, R. L. S." in his autograph.

"Memories and Portraits," 1887, with inscription "A. Cunningham, from my dear boy's mother." (The book itself was dedicated to his mother.)

"Edinburgh Picturesque Notes," 1889, with inscription "A. Cunningham, from her laddie R. L. S." The name is in Miss Cunningham's autograph, but "from her laddie R. L. S." is in Stevenson's.

"Vailima Letters," 1895, with inscription, "A. Cunningham, from dear Louis's mother, 1895."

"Weir of Hermiston," 1896, with inscription, "To Alison Cunningham, in memoriam, Robert Louis Stevenson, from his mother, May, 1896."

I added a note to the list when it appeared in my catalogue: "It is really of national importance that these volumes should be preserved in some public library or museum." But my endeavour to prevent such tender souvenirs from passing into private hands was unheeded, and I sold them eventually to an American gentleman, Mr. J. M. Williamson. When the transaction was completed I chanced to mention that Alison Cunningham had told me she possessed nothing else relating to Stevenson except a brooch containing a lock of her own hair and a curl of his at each side of it, and that R. L. S. was two and a half years old when the brooch was made. To my surprise Mr. Williamson said immediately, "You must certainly buy that for me." And, as it turned out, I never undertook a more difficult task.

I wrote at once to Alison Cunningham, suggesting that she should state her own price as I would take the brooch in any event. She answered that she was quite willing to do so, as I had been the one who purchased the books. But unfortunately she had given it to her son, a soldier in the Life Guards, and would need to recover it from him. It was her concern for her son that had caused her to part with her R. L. S. mementoes in the first place. . . . We traced him to Windsor Barracks, only to learn from him that the brooch

was in his box at the barracks in London. Still, after a deal of trouble, I managed to acquire it. Since that time R. L. S.'s old nurse has died. Not long ago a photograph of the author, autographed " To Cummy from Robert Louis Stevenson," turned up in a London auction room. It hangs in my shop-parlour to-day.

Stevenson's last nurse was Miss Large, the " little spectacled angel " he wrote about in the " Vailima Letters." She attended on him during his Samoan period, and since she came back to this country, which she did after his death, she was a frequent visitor to my shop. Miss Large told me many interesting anecdotes about the natives and their chiefs, how they worshipped Stevenson, and how they wept when he died. During his stay among them the islanders brought him presents of all kinds of clothes and rugs (made of leaves), and various objects cut out of wood and stone. On these were often to be traced the signatures of Stevenson's South Sea friends. Gradually I acquired from her everything she possessed in relation to the author, including several copies of a " Prayer " that he wrote and which she had made it her care to have printed in Samoa. When I asked her the reason for this she said :

" When Mr. Stevenson was too ill to go through his usual daily routine, I was able to help him in at least one way. That was when I took his Sunday School class for him, and I thought it would be a good plan for his scholars to learn that

'Prayer' of his. So I had copies printed and distributed at the Sunday School."

And here, complete, is the text of the little pink sheet, headed "Prayer: R. L. S. Samoa, 1894," and hitherto unpublished in England or U.S.A.:

"We beseech Thee, Lord, to behold us with favour, folk of many families and nations, gathered together in the peace of this roof, weak men and women subsisting under the covert of Thy patience. Be patient still; suffer us yet awhile longer—with our broken purposes of good, with our idle endeavours against evil—suffer us awhile longer to endure, and (if it may be), help us to do better.

"Bless to us our extraordinary mercies; if the day come when these must be taken, have us play the man under affliction. Be with our friends; be with ourselves. Go with each of us to rest; if any awake, temper to them the dark hours of watching; and when the day returns to us, our sun and comforter, call us up with morning faces and with morning hearts—eager to labour—eager to be happy, if happiness shall be our portion—and if the day be marked for sorrow—strong to endure it.

"We thank Thee and praise Thee; and in the words of Him, to Whom this day is sacred, close our oblation."

. . . . . .

I have already introduced the name of Colonel Prideaux, and I have already referred to Stevenson's pamphlet, "The Charity Bazaar." Colonel

Prideaux was a very old customer of mine. He began to collect books when he was living in India in 1884. He it was who first informed me that a pamphlet I knew by its title only, "The Pentland Rising," was written by Stevenson. I determined to get hold of a copy, as I had never seen one, and I inserted several advertisements in various journals. Eventually a copy came to me from Mr. Andrew Elliott, the original publisher of the pamphlet. A small green cover enclosed it, and Mr. Elliott's name was beneath the title. He explained that he had commissioned it as a presentation leaflet to be put into his customers' parcels. Stevenson was only sixteen at the time, and the year was 1866.

I offered to take from Mr. Elliott all the copies still in his hands, and thus came into possession of seventeen, for which I paid 2s. 6d. each. Twenty five years ago "The Pentland Rising" found purchasers at fifteen guineas, and to-day they are worth fifty to sixty. "The Charity Bazaar," Stevenson's other pamphlet, would bring about the same amount. In my note on the late Harry Widener I took occasion to speak of the rising Stevenson prices. Let me add here that in my possession once was the actual deed of copyright of "Virginibus Puerisque," which I obtained from its publisher, Kegan Paul. A thousand copies were printed of the first edition of that book in 1881. After the first five hundred copies had been sold, said the agreement, the author was to receive his first royalty—a shilling on each of

the second five hundred. To-day " Virginibus Puerisque " is worth £25 a copy.

. . . . . .

Many interesting and valuable souvenirs of " R. L. S." have passed through my hands, and some remain with me to this day. Among them is the original drawing made by the late Walter Crane for " Travels with a Donkey." Another came into my possession many years earlier through one of Stevenson's intimate friends, who called on me and announced that she owned some manuscript of Stevenson's poems that she was prepared to sell. I made an appointment to meet this lady at her residence, and, leaving my cab at the front door (with my mother still sitting in the vehicle ; she had accompanied me for the outing), I entered, and within a few moments I had not only purchased three short unpublished poems in manuscript for £35, but obtained permission to print twenty or thirty copies of the poems in a worthy manner in a small volume. I proposed to charge two or three guineas a copy, and if any profit was made it was to be handed to any hospital or charity the lady cared to name. Her permission, on these terms, was given with the provision that no initials should be given, nor any indication to whom the poems were written—Stevenson had included them on the fourth page of intimate letters.

I announced the publication in due course. Then, one afternoon, a tall stranger appeared in my shop, silk-hatted and white-bearded, obviously

a lawyer. He enquired after a copy of the little book. The book was hardly yet in type, nor would it be ready for several weeks. He called again on several occasions, and received always the same reply. In the meantime I had obtained legal advice on my side, and discovered that the lady had no authority to give me permission to print and publish the poems. Nothing belonged to her, in spite of the fact that the poems were written to herself, nothing belonged now to me, except the paper they had been inscribed upon !

So ended my attempt to become one of Stevenson's publishers. I withdrew the announcement from my advertisements, and heard nothing further about the matter. But a friend of mine, Mr. Lewis Johnson, disliked seeing the little book destroyed, and he took the copies direct from the printer to his own house at Bayswater, hoping to be able to issue them from his address on some future occasion. Odd copies got about, none the less, and I have heard of them being sold at auction in America from £30 to £35 each. I still remember, I think word-perfectly, a verse from one of the poems, written about 1873, and it has Stevenson's true quality :

" . . . And when we two are not,
Is darkness like a blot
And life and love forgot.
But when we pass that way
The night breaks into day,
The year breaks into May. . . ."

Another poem is of a maiden resting among the " vallies," sleeping unsighing : gone are the lovers whom she trembled to be near, the dancers who went round her in tune are all " departed by enchantment " from " the green beside the river " when she died.

. . . . . .

No souvenir of " R. L. S." can be more interesting to his admirers than the little collection which has come into my possession during the past few months. Dr. Robert W. Anderson, R.N., who was summoned from his ship, then lying off Samoa, to attend to Stevenson in his last moments, transferred to me the Kava Bowl, originally presented by the natives of the island to " R. L. S." and after the latter's death presented to Dr. Anderson by Mrs. Stevenson. I also purchased several letters written by the son-in-law, Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, containing grateful expressions to " my dear Anderson " for his help in their great trouble ; and a presentation copy, inscribed " To Dr. R. W. Anderson, R.N., from Fanny Stevenson," of the pamphlet entitled " A Letter to Mr. Stevenson's Friends." Mr. Lloyd Osbourne wrote this and printed it for distribution, to save himself from " the mechanical copying of saddening words and phrases, endlessly reiterating the same expressions of sorrow until they grow meaningless," that the writing of separate letters to various intimate friends of the novelist in England would have involved.

A STEVENSON ASSOCIATION ITEM

This illustration reproduces the wrapper of the actual copy of a rare Stevenson item, "A Letter to Mr. Stevenson's Friends," presented by Mrs. Stevenson to Dr. Anderson, who was one of Robert Louis Stevenson's doctors during his last illness. Accompanying the booklet are two letters from Mr. Lloyd Osbourne to Dr. Anderson, one of which, dated January 18, 1895, makes reference to the gift of the little volume.

To Dr R. W. Anderson. R.R
from Fanny Vde J. Stevenson.

A

LETTER TO MR. STEVENSON'S FRIENDS.

"I have been waiting for you these many years. Give me your hand, and welcome."

For private circulation.

MDCCCXCIV.

Robert W. Anderson

A STEVENSON "ASSOCIATION" ITEM

(See opposite page)

The pamphlet, which is dated December 17th, 1894, assumes greater value through the addition of Dr. Anderson's own notes written in ink in the margins. The description of Stevenson's last hours informs us that he worked hard all morning on his half-finished "Hermiston," which he judged the best book he had ever written, and "the sense of successful effort made him buoyant and happy as nothing else could." In the afternoon the mail fell to be answered. "At sunset he came downstairs: rallied his wife about the forebodings she could not shake off: talked of a lecturing tour to America that he was eager to make 'as he was now so well,' and played a game at cards with her to drive away her melancholy. He said he was hungry: begged her assistance to help him make a salad for the evening meal; and to enhance the little feast he brought up a bottle of old Burgundy from the cellar." Within a couple of hours he had passed away, his head supported by a rest, the gift of Shelley's son.

In addition to Mr. Lloyd Osbourne's own loving description of the final scenes, the pamphlet contains a report made by Mr. Bazett Michael Haggard, H.B.M.'s Land Commissioner in Samoa, on the proceedings at a great native feast given by "R. L. S." on October, 1894, to commemorate the building of the road to "Tusitala's" bungalow by the grateful chiefs of the island. "Chiefs," exclaimed Stevenson during his speech, "you Samoans may fight, you may conquer twenty times, and thirty times, and all will be in vain.

There is but one way to defend Samoa. Hear it, before it is too late. It is to make roads, and gardens, and care for your trees, and sell their produce wisely, and, in one word, to occupy and use your country. If you do not, others will. . . . I do not speak of this lightly, because I love Samoa and her people. I love the land, I have chosen it to be my home while I live, and my grave after I am dead : and I love the people and have chosen them to be my people to live and die with. And I see that the day is come now of the great battle : of the great and last opportunity by which it shall be decided whether you are to pass away like these other races of which I have been speaking, or to stand fast and have your children living on and honouring your memory in the land you received of your fathers."

Other features of the same pamphlet are letters by Mr. A. W. Mackay of the Friendly Islands and Samoa, and the Rev. W. E. Clarke of the London Missionary Society. There are also Mr. Edmund Gosse's well-known lines " To Tusitala in Vailima " which reached Stevenson three days before his death. And, finally, the U.S. Consul-General to Samoa contributes a description of the last entertainment over which " R. L. S." presided—a thanksgiving dinner on the evening of November 29th, when the family and their friends listened to the last speech he ever made. A very intimate speech it was : towards the close of it he spoke these words :

" There on my right sits she, who has but lately

from my own loved native land, again come back to me—she to whom with no lessening of affection to those others to whom I cling, I love better than all the world besides—my mother. From the opposite end of the table, my wife, who has been all in all to me, when the days were very dark, looks to-night into my eyes—while we have both grown a bit older—with undiminished and undiminishing affection.

" Childless, yet on either side of me sits that good woman, my daughter and the stalwart man, my son, and both have been and are more than son and daughter to me, and have brought into my life mirth and beauty. Nor is this all. There sits the bright boy, dear to my heart, full of the flow and the spirits of boyhood, so that I can ever know that for a time at least, we have still the voice of a child in the house. . . .

" Perhaps, indeed it is most likely," were almost his final words before he sat down, " that this same company may never be again assembled." Mr. Mulligan, the U.S. Consul, gives the sequel :

" Before one short week had passed he lay peacefully sleeping the sleep of death, in that self-same room, proudly, it seemed, reposing on a mass of priceless fine-mats, which he loved so much, brought in numbers, as funeral offerings, by mourning Samoan chieftains, who felt that their Chief had fallen. On wall, and bracket, and statuette, were still pendant the withering garlands of the Thanksgiving dinner."

CHAPTER XIII

Sir Sidney Colvin and Keats. Keats and Shelley. And what is perhaps the most wonderful "Association" Book in the world.

It is hardly possible to recall Robert Louis Stevenson to-day without thinking of Sir Sidney Colvin, his greatest friend and his life-long confidant. When Sir Sidney retired from his official position as Keeper of Prints at the British Museum, he destroyed, as he told me, some hundreds of letters written to him by various authors which he regarded as too personal ever to be read by the public. More than once, calling on him in the last days of his stay at the Museum I found him heaped round with manuscript, half-scorched by the flames he was feeding with it, and occasionally drinking soda-water to moisten his parched mouth and throat. The task must have occupied long hours. I pleaded with him to save at least some of the letters, especially those written to him by Browning and Meredith: for he and Lady Colvin (through whose kindness I was once able to acquire a rare copy of "Deacon Brodie," Stevenson and Henley's play, 1880) have been associated with a larger number of the distinguished

Victorians than it was possible for the casual student to understand before the recent publication of Sir Sidney's recollections. Not with Browning, however, not even with Stevenson, I venture to prophesy, will posterity connect his name primarily. His book on "John Keats, his life and poetry, his friends, critics and after-fame," is already being accepted as the final and authoritative study of the great poet.

My own service to Sir Sidney Colvin on behalf of this monumental volume was insignificant, but I like to recall that in 1915 it was to me he came for John Hamilton Reynolds' little volumes of verse—"Safie," written at eighteen years of age in 1814, "The Naiad" (1816), and "The Eden of Imagination." I also helped in small ways with the Keats manuscripts and books in my collection. Some years ago I purchased the "deed of copyright" which reveals how Keats sold for one hundred pounds what was actually his whole life's work—that is, he sold to Taylor and Hessey, his publishers, the rights in "Poems" 1817, "Endymion" 1818, and "Lamia" 1820. Aware that he would never return alive from Italy, they persuaded him to make the deed before he sailed. I bought the actual parchment for £225, and it is now in America. It seemed to me, as I looked on that humble document, a terrible thing that I should pay more than twice the sum which the poet himself received for such a token of the deathless beauty he gave to the world.

. . . . . .

Which is the most interesting "association" book in existence? I had my own views on the question when, a few years ago, I came upon the following item in the catalogue of a sale of Shelley property at the poet's old home near Southampton: "Keats's Endymion: 1st edition, 1818, half-calf, with inscription in author's handwriting on the title-page: 'To Percy Bysshe Shelley, Esq., from his friend J. K.'"

When I read this announcement I determined to attend personally at the auction, nor did I intend to retire from the bidding even though it went on for ever. I wanted the pleasure of owning that wonderful little volume, for a day if no longer, though of course my family feared I had suddenly become crazy.

The bidding commenced. A dozen book-dealers and collectors were taking their part in it, though they gradually dropped out as the figure rose. At length only another and myself were competing, and then, to my great joy, the volume came to me.

But my ownership of that memorable treasure was restricted to twenty-four hours.

. . . . . .

Eighteen months ago a young gentleman from Exeter College, Oxford, Mr. Walter Edwin Peck, called upon me and asked for my permission to search through the unpublished Shelley MSS. housed at 27 New Oxford Street. This I readily granted, and was gratified to learn that Mr. Peck's labours were productive. No new light on the

poet is cast by the letters he discovered, of course ; but they all go to accentuate one's previous impression of a generous-hearted and amazing unpractical personality. Many of the letters are addressed to Messrs. Brookes and Dixon, Bankers, Chancery Lane, London, from Bath, Bishopsgate Heath, Great Marlow, Dover, Naples, Florence, Geneva and Pisa, between 1815 and 1822. He actually presents bills to individuals for various amounts, which later he is obliged to plead with his bankers not to pay, " as they depend upon conditional engagements with friends in England, who ought to be prepared to meet them." He finds it necessary to write : " Oblige me by adjoining the exact state of my present account with you." He expresses anxiety as to whether his letters and remittances have gone astray, and once he is absent-minded enough to withdraw money from the wrong bank! Then there is an item of £100, which he cannot understand his bankers paying out from his account. " May I trouble you to send me the earliest and most circumstantial explanation of this affair, as if there should be any forgery in the business it will be necessary to take the most immediate steps."

We learn that his income was paid in quarterly instalments of £250 each. He instructs from Pisa on January 25th, 1822, that a hundred and fifty pounds shall be paid to Mr. Leigh Hunt at Dartmouth—evidently on his setting sail for Italy. At the same time he asks for a letter of credit upon Leghorn for the amount of the two ensuing

quarters of his income, " as without some arrangement of the sort I could not undertake a tour that I project beyond the limits of mercantile communication. I am not in the habit of troubling you with requests of this sort, nor should at present, if the friend who has usually been kind enough to accommodate me were at present in England." Poor, modest Shelley, grateful for a business service as though it were a friend's ! He was not to make many more requests of any sort, for the journey he is preparing to finance was that whose disastrous end came right at its beginning.

One fears that Shelley's generosity must have landed him into strained relations with his bankers. " You will be so obliging as to pay Mr. Leigh Hunt or his order," he writes on February 20th, 1822, " the amount of my quarter's income due in March." Unless, of course, he had additional moneys coming to him from other sources. His utter self-abandonment, when a friend's welfare was his concern, is illustrated in other directions : for example, by the letter written to Leigh Hunt on June 24th, 1822, in which we find that in order to welcome Hunt he proposed to set sail from Lerici to Genoa, a two days' journey. " I prepared my boat, rigged up all the sails, laid in provisions, and Williams had already gone on board to weigh anchor, when poor Mary suffered a relapse, which though in the issue not serious, was sufficient to warn me of the necessity of remaining with her for the present. She is much better now, although confined to the sofa." As

an alternative, therefore, he suggests that Hunt should arrange with the captain of the ship to give notice by rocket or gun of the approach to Lerici, so that Shelley might "instantly come alongside." His eagerness to welcome one who would surely prove an additional encumbrance is entirely selfless: earlier in the letter he has confessed that some of the money he had intended to give to Hunt he had been obliged to employ in housekeeping, although he assures Hunt that he shall have it when they meet. "I can scarcely pardon myself for having alarmed you by my silence. But I relied on your being better off than fortune seems ever to permit a person of generous feelings to be—but we must try to cure fortune of this antipathy."

Shelley's devotion to the older writer is well-known. "Give Bessie a thousand thanks from me for writing out in that pretty neat hand your kind and powerful defence," he says, in an earlier letter addressed to Hunt at the "Examiner" office, 19 Catherine Street, Strand, London—the reference is to Hunt's wife. "Ask her what she would like best from Italian land. We mean to bring you all something: and Mary and I have been wondering what it shall be. Do you each of you choose." This letter was used in part by Mr. Roger Ingpen in his volume of Shelley letters some years ago, but it remained for Mr. Peck to complete it with several additional passages, one of which, referring to Hunt's translation of Tasso, shows

how highly Shelley thought of Hunt as a poet, although Keats had by that time (1819), lost most of his regard for the poetic as well as the other side of him :

" You are formed to be a living fountain & not a canal however clear. When I read your nymphs, which is a poem original and intense, conceived with the clearest sense of ideal beauty and executed with the fullest and most flowing lyrical power, and yet defined with the most intelligible outline of thought and language, I envy Tasso his translator because it deprives us of a poet."

And a leaf from Shelley's notebook, also discovered by Mr. Peck, reveals the young enthusiast addressing Hunt the man, as follows :

" In that patient and irreconcilable opposition with domestic and political tyranny and imposture, which the terror of your life has illustrated, and which had I health and talent should illustrate mine and action of mine, let us, comforting each other in our task, live and die." Afterwards, with emendations, this passage is incorporated into the dedication of the " Cenci " to Hunt. There are many other fragments of surpassing interest in this Shelley notebook. And among the MSS. which I was able to place before Mr. Peck, one is a fragment of the original draft of Mary Shelley's two-act drama on " Proserpine." This work, of course, was unpublished : the final and complete draft, in Mrs. Shelley's autograph, is in the Shelley collection in the Bodleian Library.

The drama was, as Mr. Peck points out, one of two done by Mary Shelley in the winter of 1820-1821 at Pisa. The fragment in my possession, in her autograph, bears corrections throughout by Shelley. Therefore, Mr. Peck claims, it is important in the sense that the so far neglected MS. of Edward William's play "The Promise," also corrected by Shelley, is important. "They indicate," he explains, "what wonders Shelley wrought even on the least promising material, lifting the commonplace to the realm of magic and the dead word to a note of music."

CHAPTER XIV

An Interlude. Some Book Prices Twenty Years Ago and To-day.

Here and there in the preceding chapters I have had occasion to affix, for the purpose of comparative values, a monetary figure against each of several books introduced into my narrative: and in the chapters to come I expect I shall require to do so again. But lest any reader, given to studying and noting the ups and downs of prices, should regard the method as too incidental and haphazard, I feel that it will not be amiss if I pause for a few pages and, while my old catalogues are spread before me, endeavour to review more definitely the prices of volumes as they stood twenty years ago and as they stand at the present time.

Book collectors are notoriously fickle. Sometimes, quite unaccountably, they develop a craze for a particular author, and will sacrifice any amount of money in order to acquire even his most insignificant work. I have already shown Robert Louis Stevenson to be a case in point. On two occasions

previously has reference been made to the prices of " R. L. S." first editions. You may spend a thousand pounds on his pamphlets alone. In addition to these pamphlets, and to " New Arabian Nights " and " Virginibus Puerisque," I may touch here upon the play, " Deacon Brodie, or the Double Life," done in collaboration with W. E. Henley. The edition published in 1880 for private circulation only has leapt up in price from five guineas, the figure marked in my 1905 catalogues, to fifty-five guineas. The value of " The Story of a Lie," published in 1882, has increased correspondingly, from twelve guineas to about thirty-five pounds. Strangely enough, with " Ballads," published in 1890, there has been an exception to these instances of a large increase. From 8s. 6d. this volume of poetry has risen to 35s. only, the price at which a first edition may still be acquired.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling is another example of the author whose output is practically all sought after. The first Indian edition of " Plain Tales from the Hills," 1888, was listed in the bookseller's catalogues of twenty years ago at £2 : to-day a copy is worth £35. Similarly, " Soldiers Three " has advanced from thirty shillings to £45. The most remarkable of Mr. Kipling's works, from the collector's standpoint, are " Schoolboy Lyrics," printed for private circulation in 1881 with a brown paper wrapper by the Lahore Civil and Military Press, and " Echoes : by Two Writers," with the same imprint, a crude booklet in paper

cover whose contents include a group of "Nursery Rhymes for Little Anglo-Indians":

"Hushaby Baby . . .
When the hot weather comes,
Baby will die,
With a fine *pucca* tomb
In the ce-me-te-ry."

The value of these two extremely rare booklets may be gauged from the fact that I know of a copy of "Schoolboy Lyrics" inscribed by Mr. Kipling's father to a friend, and priced at £215. In passing I may say that I have often been asked about the value of the issue of "Lippincott's Magazine" for January, 1891, wherein Mr. Kipling's novel, "The Light that Failed," was first published. For some reason that I am unable to explain, unless it be that a good many copies are knocking about, the handful of shillings that would procure the issue twenty years ago will procure it to-day.

Few other modern writers have the all-round vogue of Mr. Kipling. True, Henry James's first editions are constantly rising in value—the more cultured among readers, it is of interest to note, are increasing in number as collectors—but there is a good deal of discrimination being used in the bibliographical approach to him. The two novels in highest favour are "The Princess Casamassima," which has risen to £4 10s. 0d., and "The Bostonians," to £3 10s. 0d. As for William Morris, I have not been asked for a first edition

of any of his books for many years, although I am aware that "The Defence of Guenevere," 1858, cloth uncut, has advanced from 5s. to £1 5s. 0d. Christina Rossetti's market does not appear to be rising at all. On the other hand, a set of four issues of "The Germ," wherein was first printed "The Blessed Damozel," by her brother, Dante Gabriel, is extremely valuable, having increased in a score of years from five guineas to forty-five. And Richard Jefferies, whose market for a long period seemed to be undergoing depreciation, is now gaining comparative popularity. Twenty years ago I remember disposing of nine volumes of his best works, first editions, for twelve guineas. Each book was inscribed with an autograph presentation to one and the same person, who had inked out his own family name before selling them. But the fact of the volumes remaining with unopened sheets is a melancholy evidence that this particular friend of poor Jefferies was careless of his connection with such an unrivalled painter of country life, scenes, and people. Jefferies pendates each book in its year of publication: which is a fair ground for assuming that his friend was highly regarded. "Bevis, the story of a Boy," in three volumes, 1882, is the most important single work by Jefferies. I recall that it used to be priced at thirty-six shillings: to-day it will fetch £3. The position with regard to Andrew Lang has never yet been fixed. It would take a whole bookcase to hold the complete set of volumes produced by that popular man of letters:

but the only examples sought after are the fairy-books, each of which has a certain value. The "Blue Fairy Book," the earliest of the series, is perhaps the most in demand, the large-paper illustrated edition limited to 150 copies and published in 1891 having advanced to five guineas from £1 5s. od., the amount that was marked in my catalogue of 1904.

There is none of this uncertainty about the novels and poetry of George Meredith. Turning to a catalogue which I published in 1905 I read: "'The Tale of Chloe,' etc., first edition, 1894, limited to 250 copies, this being numbered "2" with Meredith's autograph on the fly-leaf: £6 6s. od." To-day such a copy would be worth twenty-four guineas. The "Poems," in cloth, uncut, 1851, was a volume valued at eighteen guineas eighteen years ago: it is now worth £28. "Modern Love," a presentation copy with three corrections in the text and an inscription on the title page, "Mrs. Shirley Brooks from the Author," 1862, figured in my list of 1904 at eight guineas. The fortunate buyer is fifty pounds the richer if he has retained it until to-day. Moreover, I remember a complete set of Meredith "firsts" in fifty volumes going for £67 10s. od. in that same year. Just now a similar set is worth £220.

The poet whom the author of "Modern Love" characterised at his death as "the greatest of our lyrical poets, the greatest in the world," for whom "song was his natural voice," is at the present

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time undergoing a phase which, compared with the position of Meredith himself, must seem like neglect. But Swinburnians will not be dismayed: for it is, of course, simply due to a swing of the pendulum, and, after all, pendulums keep on swinging. "Atalanta in Calydon," published by Moxon in 1865, was worth £5 17s. 6d. a score of years ago: to-day eleven guineas would procure a copy. Swinburne's essay on William Blake, that was then offered for £2 18s. 6d., is now worth five guineas. But for the rest, the only interesting item is that of the pamphlet "Cleopatra," published by Hotton in 1866, immediately after the first series of "Poems and Ballads." The edition was very limited, and a good copy sewed and uncut was valued in 1900 at eight guineas. For some reason or other the prices of this and similar pamphlets remain stationary. In the case of Robert Browning there has been no advance on the nine guineas for which a copy of "Paracelsus," 1835, might have been purchased in 1903, nor on the price of £7 18s. 6d., which was then asked for "Strafford." Not even "Dramatis Personae," 1864, would fetch more than the twelve pounds at which I offered an autographed copy in the old days. To set against these, however, we have just one volume, "Bells and Pomegranates," which in the original eight parts used to be worth £60. To-day it is sought after at £200. The market for Oscar Wilde's works needs just as careful watching. "Lady Windermere's Fan,"

for example, has only advanced from £5 15s. od. to £8 os. od., "Intentions," 1891, has not gone up from £5 15s. od., while "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," 1898, has advanced from 6s. to £5, and "Vera," 1882, from three to forty guineas.

The interest of collectors in some writers is restricted to a single volume, or two at most. George Bernard Shaw seems a good illustration of this—"Cashel Byron's Profession," 1886, priced at 30s. in 1905, is now offered for £4. But Richard Blackmore is a better illustration, with his first and extraordinarily mediocre attempt at fiction, "Clara Vaughan," and with "Lorna Doone," each making the astonishing leap in twenty years from six to sixty guineas! I note a Blackmore item in my catalogues of 1904 which ran: "'The Farm and Fruit of Old,' a translation in verse of the 1st and 2nd Georgics of Virgil, by a Market Gardener, first edition 1862: price 28s.": I used to think this read so pleasantly that it surely would read more pleasantly still in the future. But it remains as it was. Then there is the case of Lewis Carroll. I found a purchaser in 1904 for his four best books in one parcel—"Alice in Wonderland" (1866), "Phantasmagoria" (1869), "Through the Looking Glass" (1872), and "The Hunting of the Snark" (1876). The amount realised was £35. To-day the same parcel would be worth £60, but the enhanced figure would be chiefly because of "Alice." I might mention at this point that I was well

acquainted with the Rev. C. L. Dodgson, Carroll's real name. He called at my shop with another clergyman, whom he introduced, I remember, as a Mr. Draper. He was a chatty old gentleman, was Carroll, always talking about the mathematical problems that took the form of games. Metaphorically speaking, he was eternally striving to square the circle. A collection of old puzzles stored in one of my upper rooms had a peculiar fascination for him. Afterwards in the letters he wrote to me, of which there were many, he always drew some sort of riddle in diagram at the corner !

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" Pierce Egan's ' Life in London, or the day and night scenes of Jerry Hawthorn, Esq., and his elegant friend Corinthian Tom, accompanied by Bob Logic, the Oxonian, in their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis,' with 36 splendid coloured plates, scenes from real life, designed and etched by J. R. and G. Cruikshank, and woodcuts by the same artists, 1st edition, pictorial boards, as issued, with the advertisements at end : Sherwood, 1821."—So runs an item in one of those twenty-year old catalogues. This is the state in which the collector wishes to get that sterling old book. But he seldom can. The consequence is that copies were not to be had under seventeen guineas in 1904 and cannot be bought to-day for less than £35. If by chance the collector should have possessed " Life in London," in the twelve monthly parts instead of in pictorial boards it was worth £30, and is now worth £130. A book

rather of the same class is Coombe's "Tour of Doctor Syntax through London, or the Pleasures and Miseries of the Metropolis," in verse with twenty coloured plates by an imitator of Rowlandson (first edition, 1820). This has increased in value from £5 to £18. The reference to Pierce Egan's work in the twelve monthly parts leads me to make mention of Douglas Jerrold's "A Man Made of Money," with six full page plates by John Leech. A choice copy of the first edition in the six monthly parts with all the wrappers is now worth £7 as compared with the £3 at which it was catalogued in 1904. Although the increase is nothing to boast about, it might be worth noting that this kind of publication is increasingly difficult to obtain in the original parts.

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Without exception the great poets are in favour, and their works rise in value from year to year. Indeed the changes rung upon the figures chalked against several volumes are remarkable. None of them, however, has increased in value so rapidly as those of Percy Bysshe Shelley. "The Cenci" used to be offered for the quite moderate sum of eight pounds, but a good copy of the edition published at Pisa in 1821 is to-day worth more like a hundred and eight! A first edition copy of "Queen Mab," 1813, wanting as usual the title page and dedication to Harriet, also the imprint on the concluding page, "printed by P. B. Shelley," could have been purchased for

£5 15s. 0d. twenty years ago; but the book has increased in value largely because we are now almost certain that every copy of it, except a very small number at the commencement, passed through Shelley's own hands, and that he personally excised the title pages, dedications, and imprints. Only 250 copies, it has been said, were printed in all, and each of them is worth £40 to-day. The poetry of Keats, again, shows a striking increase. "Endymion" used to be priced at eleven guineas, but to-day a copy will fetch at least sixty-five pounds. Originally this book was more in favour with collectors than the "Lamia" volume, which was priced at a guinea less. To-day "Lamia, Isabella, and other poems" is worth £95.

But let us take a backward step for a moment, and review the book-prices that concern one or two of the authors of an earlier century. Of course, we see no advance in the case of Swift as emphatic as those of Shelley's and Keats's works. "The Tale of a Tub," first edition, published in 1704 by John Nutt, an ancestor of the late David Nutt, was worth six guineas eighteen years ago. To-day it is worth eighteen pounds. Even the "Story of the Injured Lady, being a True Picture of Scotch Perfidy, Irish Poverty, and English Partiality," with letters and poems never before printed, offered for £4 in 1904, is not worth more than four or five times that amount to-day. A footnote attached by my old librarian to the item in one of my catalogues reads: "This

appeared one year after the much lamented death of this pillar of the Church. There is little doubt, however, of its being from his pen. It has all his bestiality, foulness, and insolence. 'A Love Poem from a Physician to his 'Mistress' could not have been written by anyone else. The Church and the United Services had a monopoly of well-educated blackguards in those days."

About dear old "Nolly" Goldsmith there is a different tale to tell. Not in regard to "The Citizen of the World," though, this being one of his more slowly-moving works. A first edition in two volumes, calf, dated 1762, was priced at £4 10s. 0d. twenty years back. To-day it has just about doubled in value—not more. There is, on the other hand, "The Vicar of Wakefield." The first London edition of the "Vicar," 1766, without a printer's name, is really the second edition, although it has been sold as a first for a good price. It need not concern us here except that its price in my 1904 catalogue may be noted —three guineas. But the value of the genuine first edition, in two volumes, contemporary leather, published at Salisbury in 1766, was £40. To-day such a copy is worth £150. The "Salisbury" imprint is hard to get, difficult to buy, and easy to sell.

Walter Savage Landor's works are showing a striking increase in value. I account for this by the fact I have already mentioned of a good many scholars becoming collectors, and it is to such an author that they turn naturally. The volume of

" Poems " dated 1795 is now worth £25, whereas a score years ago a copy might have been picked up for twenty-five shillings. " Gebir," a subsequent poem, has increased in value from £2 to £32. The two series of " Imaginary Conversations of Literary Men and Statesmen " are not quite so brisk, although the first edition, 1825-29, in five volumes, has quadrupled in value from three pounds since 1904. Harrison Ainsworth, too, is growing in popularity. His two chief volumes are " Guy Fawkes," three volumes, 1841, now worth £18, and " The Tower of London," which can command £25 in the original serial parts. Lord Lytton's " Lucretia, or the Children of Night," 1846, an inscribed presentation copy of which I remember passing through my hands at the beginning of this century, has not increased in value from £3, the price then affixed to it. As against this, the supply of Thomas Love Peacock's first edition volumes is not up to the demand. They have increased considerably in value, but are so scarce that I have been looking in vain for uncut Peacocks these several years.

The most interesting of George Borrow's books seems to be the little-known " Word-Book of the Romany," 1874, which shows an increase in value from 8s. 6d. to £8. The position of the other Borrow books may be estimated by that of " Romany Rye," a first edition of which, in two volumes, 1857, has climbed in price from five to nine guineas. Anthony Trollope, like some of his own hunting characters, is a pretty high

jumper. To form a complete set of Trollope's writings you need to acquire not less than 139 volumes of one kind or another! Many of them are practically unobtainable. To give an indication of the separate values of Trollope's novels I select at random "Ayala's Angel," in three volumes, 1881. This has steadily increased in price until it is now impossible to procure under £3 10s. 0d. In one of my catalogues for 1905 I find an offer of a set of Charles Lever's novels either in the original monthly parts or the original volumes with wrappers and advertisements intact. The price was £88 10s. 0d. To-day such a set is worth three hundred pounds. Of the separate works, "Harry Lorrequer," and "Con Cregan," each in the monthly parts, have increased respectively from four guineas and five guineas to fifty pounds.

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Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Scott: Dickens, Thackeray, and Charlotte Brontë! These are breath-taking names with which to round off such a curt fragment of market gossip. And the figures that are associated with their works must take the breath also. "An Evening Walk," 1795, and "Descriptive Sketches," 1796, by William Wordsworth, show an increase in twenty years from six pounds to seventy pounds apiece. Similarly, Coleridge's "Poems," first edition, 1796, has risen from a guinea to thirty pounds, and his "Fears in Solitude," 1794, which once might have been had for twenty-five shillings, is

worth £9. Two rare pamphlets by Coleridge, "Conciones ad Populum, or Addresses to the People," privately printed in 1795, and "The Plot Discovered: or an Address to the People against Ministerial Treason," privately printed at Bristol in 1795 also, are usually sold together, but each is worth £15. They were issued in Coleridge's twenty-third year, about twelve months after his discharge from serving as a private soldier in the Dragoons, and in the catalogues to which I have so often referred in this chapter they were marked at £4 10s. 0d. apiece.

As for Sir Walter Scott, the majority of his novels seem to have found their level—a high level, I may add, solid, like himself. "Rob Roy," as published, has remained stationary for a long time at the figure of £11 5s. 0d. But I would like to meet the collector who would look with disdain on "Waverley," "Guy Mannering," or the first series of "Talks of My Landlord." These three, in boards uncut, have always been rare books, and since 1902 "Guy Mannering" has increased in worth from £20 to £100, "Tales of My Landlord" from £40 to £150, and, biggest change of all, "Waverley" from £35 to £400!

Last year I purchased for £64 a copy of "Poems," by Currer, Acton, and Ellis Bell, published in 1846 by Aylott and Jones. Twenty years ago a similar copy went into the market at £2 18s. 6d. Eighteen guineas would then

procure a copy of "Jane Eyre" (first edition, three volumes, 1847). To-day it is worth eighty guineas. Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," a first edition in the twenty monthly parts with all the yellow pictorial wrappers, illustrated with forty full-page etchings and numerous woodcuts by the author, the suppressed "Marquis of Steyne" included, has risen in value during the same period from £105 to £400. When Thackeray wrote as "Michael Angelo Titmarsh" he produced "The Second Funeral of Napoleon, in three letters to Miss Smith of London; and the Chronicle of the Drum," the publisher being "Hugh Cunningham, St. Martin's Place, Trafalgar Square, 1841." Twenty years ago this piece of journalism was valued at £18. It is excessively rare, however, and to-day a copy in the original wrappers is worth three hundred pounds. I have already said so much about Charles Dickens that I need only record here that among the *soberer* increases there are those of "Martin Chuzzlewit," in all the twenty parts, 1843-4, from £7 7s. 0d. to £30; "The Christmas Carol," in the first issue of the first edition, 1843, with the green end-papers, and the heading "Stave *I*" which was afterwards altered to "Stave *One*," has increased from eight guineas to thirty pounds; and "The Village Coquettes," a comic opera in two acts, first edition, Bentley, 1836, from fourteen to twenty-four guineas. Let us set against these a single example by no means "sober": that of "Pickwick" in the original parts with

SONGS,

CHORUSES, AND CONCERTED PIECES,

IN

The Operatic Burletta

OF

THE VILLAGE COQUETTES,

AS PRODUCED AT

THE SAINT JAMES'S THEATRE.

THE DRAMA AND WORDS OF THE SONGS

BY "BOZ."

THE MUSIC BY JOHN HULLAH.

THE MUSIC IS PUBLISHED BY MESSRS. CRAMER AND CO.,
201, REGENT STREET.

PRINTED BY BRADBURY AND EVANS, WHITEFRIARS.

1837.

[*Price Tenpence.*]

A RARE DICKENS ITEM.

Although the libretto of Dickens' comic opera *The Village Coquettes* is very highly prized by Dickens collectors, the little booklet of songs and choruses, extracted from the piece and sold for tenpence in the theatre during the performances, is a much greater rarity. Indeed, not more than four or five copies of this pamphlet (the outside wrapper of which is here reproduced) are known to exist.

the four addresses and all the " points." Twenty years ago the market price was £70. To-day it would realise not less than £1210, a figure already reached in the sale-room !

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Just a note on Alfred, Lord Tennyson, as postscript. I risk the possibility of making an anticlimax, but in view of this great Poet-Laureate's neglect from the literary standpoint by the poets of our day I ought to say that there is no such neglect by collectors. Three examples in support of this may be cited. " Poems Chiefly Lyrical," first edition, 1830, which figured in my old catalogues at eight guineas is now worth eighteen: while Tennyson's first production, a pamphlet of 1829 embodying a school prize poem, has risen from two to twelve guineas. The only other example that preceded " Poems Chiefly Lyrical " was " Poems by Two Brothers," 1827, which, in the small paper edition, has increased from £6 to £30, and in large paper from £12 to £60. How refreshing to find at least one body of people who, fickle though they can often be, refuse to be influenced by the twists and turns of artistic opinion, that seems to me, an observer at a distance, to set a fashion as whimsical and as religiously followed by the artist-folk themselves as are feminine vogues in dress by the ladies, to the accompaniment of our indulgent masculine smile.

CHAPTER XV

Old Ghosts from Fleet Street. Clement Scott and George Augustus Sala. Sir Edwin Arnold. Henley and Andrew Lang. And a Ghost from the Lyceum, Sir Henry Irving.

FAMILIAR old figures are flickering before me as with these later chapters I travel down the hill of authorship again from the high half-way point to which my climb has taken me—an arduous climb for a beginner, though pleasant enough, now that I can look back upon it. The figures are of actors, writers, artists—a bookshop is a magnet that draws them all. Many are now, alas, out of the zone of attraction forever. But some, I trust, will set my familiar door bell jangling again, jangling often : I shall be glad to welcome them as long as I am here myself.

In London quite lately two Shakespeare First Folios were sold by auction, realising £8600 and £5400 respectively. Had Sir Henry Irving been in his prime a score of years later than he was actually he might have been spared a deal of the distress which was perhaps the greater factor in his premature death. A copy of the Shakespeare

First Folio was in his library. When it was put up for sale a very small sum, comparatively, was realized. To-day it would have earned him three thousand pounds.

Sir Henry Irving used to come into my shop often, pursuing his tireless search for early editions of his great master's plays. I have kept many of his letters addressed to me. But the occasion of our earliest meeting was elsewhere. A mutual friend of ours in 1885 was Mr. Frank A. Marshall, who was editing the Henry Irving Shakespeare, and his health was so bad that he was often confined to his house at 8 Bloomsbury Square. Irving was a frequent visitor there, and I, too, would spend long hours with the invalid, talking about Dickens and Thackeray, and the rest of our favourite authors. Marshall's second wife was Miss Ada Cavendish, the well-known tragedienne of the period.

There it was that I had the privilege of an introduction to the great actor. To-day, as souvenirs of those old days, I possess the dagger used by him in "Hamlet" and his Shylock's knife. I purchased them when the Lyceum Theatre came under the auctioneer's hammer. I also came into possession of some thousands of unsold copies of each souvenir of the plays, and many of the play-books containing Irving's own notes. Further, there is a photograph taken on an Atlantic liner during a voyage back to England after one of his American tours. The photograph is signed by himself and by each member of his

company—including Laurence and Henry, his gifted children.

After Irving's death his valet came to me and made an offer (which I accepted) of a very interesting relic. It was the bentwood chair that had been specially constructed for the famous tragedian, measuring a certain height and width, so that immediately Irving made an exit from the stage during a performance he could sink into it and rest there for any spare minute. I wonder how many actors nowadays spend their energy as completely as did their unforgettable predecessor? In parenthesis I would like to say here that there is no need to ask such a question about Sir John Martin-Harvey, for whom and for Lady Martin-Harvey my mother has collected some wonderful Chinese jewellery at Shanklin. They and she are neighbours, living only two miles apart.

Sir Henry Irving was very particular about that chair. Once when he reached the town of Nottingham everybody was dismayed to find that the chair had been left behind in London. Sir Henry refused point-blank to appear without its customary assistance. A special train had to be chartered by telegraph, at a cost that didn't matter so long as the famous actor got his chair.

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In Irving's time there was no more familiar figure in the London theatres, though on the audience's side of the curtain, than Clement Scott, the critic. His pronouncements in the "Daily

Telegraph" were feared. He was also editor of a shilling monthly called "The Theatre," in which he amplified at leisure his judgments made for the "Telegraph": and he was proprietor of a weekly journal, "The Free Lance," carried on for a time after his death by his widow.

Clement Scott was everything one thinks of at the word "Bohemian." I have met many "Bohemians" in my time, but none so thorough-going as he. He loved to wander through the London streets and into the clubs: he was a book-lover of the absent-minded type—that is, when he was in my shop he had oftener than not to be brought back to earth before he took his departure. He simply revelled in old editions, and the deep entertainment on his refined poet's face was good to see. His enquiries were innumerable: he gave many commissions: he desired the old dramatists with a perfect passion.

The trouble he took over those "Daily Telegraph" theatre-notices was hardly believable. He told me that he dreamed of an ideal first night system, by which all plays were produced on Saturdays, so that he might employ his Sundays in carefully considering the performance from every standpoint. In addition to his column or two columns for the next morning's paper, he sent off long telegraphic messages to an American newspaper concerning the same event. His strength and endurance gave out in the end, and it was small wonder.

Away from the traffickings of the theatre and

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the London streets, Clement Scott might have been found, as I found him, in his own delightful house in Woburn Square. There, undisturbed by thoughts of what new vengeance the players he had criticised were planning against him, he wooed the muse. . . . Once I obtained from him the tall yet modest confession that he considered his own poem, " The Garden of Sleep," would live. He had also a great fondness for his " Midshipmite," a piece that gained world-wide popularity in the 'eighties. I have never been curious enough to enquire what poets think of Clement Scott's poetry to-day.

It grieved me to see Scott towards the end. His mind seemed to be shadowed by a cloud, and his keen brightness was radiated no longer. I need not dwell on his final months. When he had gone finally I missed him and his refined patronage more poignantly than I can say.

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Is it because the two men were colleagues on the same morning newspaper, or is it because they had so much in common, outwardly as well as in the mind, that I never recall Clement Scott without thinking of George Augustus Sala? Everybody recognised the initials " G. A. S." whenever they were encountered, just as we know exactly what " G. B. S." or " G. K. C." stand for to-day. But few people knew that Sala wrote a " Telegraph " leading article, as he told me, every night for thirteen years without missing a single issue! I suppose we have men who do

just as much in these times, although journalists tell me that changes in a leader-writing staff are more frequent. Sala was a contemporary of Custance, the "Times" leader-writer who received £3000 a year from one of the famous Walter family for writing every night. At that period "The Times" held a dinner each evening at six o'clock, in the fine room on your left as you enter the northern section of the building in Printing House Square.

At this dinner the subjects of the next morning's leaders were discussed and arranged, and at half-past seven the diners would retire to their various rooms to write them. "Copy" would begin to come from them at about a quarter past nine.

To return to George A. Sala and the "Daily Telegraph." I expect some such method prevailed in the Fleet Street building. At any rate, Sala would leave his article at the office before ten o'clock, and spend the remainder of the evening either at his club or his charming flat at Victoria. An amusing experience befell him one night. His wife told me the story. It appears that he suddenly rose up in bed just after retiring and announced that he would need to get up and go back to the "Telegraph" office.

"Why, you completed your leader all right?" "Yes, but I must go back. Get me a cab at the door. I have just remembered that I broke one of Lord Burnham's rules, and my mistake must

be prevented by hook or crook from going into the world to-morrow ! "

So Sala went off to Fleet Street through the deserted midnight, got possession of his proof and rectified the error. He had repeated a word in the one sentence !

Lord Burnham, senr., regarded his old servant very highly. They had both known Charles Dickens intimately, and they retained their places at his shrine until the end of their lives. One of the many favours that Lord Burnham bestowed on Sala was that which enabled him to obtain money up to almost any amount from the " Telegraph " cashier whenever he needed it. It was very convenient for " G. A. S.", though he never took a wrong advantage of the arrangement. He was easy-going with money, and would spend every penny on a rare book in my shop and find himself later in the day with an empty purse, though it didn't matter so long as the " Daily Telegraph " cashier was within reach.

A good book was to him a bit of Heaven ! So was a good meal. He loved the table and all the good things that could be heaped upon it. He talked about food as enthusiastically as he talked about literature, although disappointment was in store for him through that very enthusiasm. Major Pond, the famous lecture-agent, arranged a tour for him in Australia, and failure was the result of it. " All we can get from this famous man," the Australians complained, " is a series of rhapsodic descriptions of hotel dinners." And

the majority of them echoed Mark Twain's old saying, " I have paid my dollar, and I don't want to see or hear him again."

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I think that the " Daily Telegraph " was the most bookish-minded of all the morning newspapers during the latter part of the nineteenth century. I am estimating its literary quality by the number of " Telegraph " men who were my visitors and customers. Sir Edwin Arnold, a one-time editor, was the poet of " The Light of Asia." Often he would slip quietly through my front door and lose himself quickly in the pages of the book I had put aside for him to look at, even though he might not require it for his own. Sir Edwin was a man who made an immediate impression : his slight figure, white slender hands, noble head and eloquent dark eyes, bespoke the sensitive litterateur, the bookman to whom a good volume was one of the chief treasures in the world. He was naturally devoted to the writings of the East. Only second in his favour were songs and stories of the sea. Nothing delighted this contemporary of the great Delane so much as to escape from Fleet Street to his favourite yacht and wash away the writer's mists and cobwebs in the ocean spray and salted winds.

And how he loved to meet a kindred spirit, browsing, like him, among my books ! A reference to his own best-known poem gave him a boyish satisfaction, and I looked forward to the occasions on which I was able to tell him that

someone had been enquiring after a copy of his own work—for he was better known as an author in those days than he is twenty-five years later. Best of all, I liked his way of handling a treasured book. It indicated a spirit of true reverence, and he would turn the pages with the emotion only experienced in the mind that recognizes what are the true riches of men. On him they worked, as they work on just a few mortals, their immortal spell.

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William Ernest Henley and Andrew Lang! Journalists both, and outside the "Telegraph." I have in my possession one of the last letters Henley ever wrote. "What I want," he says, and he is writing to me from Heather Brae, Maybury Hill, Woking, "is not 'Rhoda Fleming' (1890), which I return, but 'Harry Richmond' (1887), for which I beg you to exchange my ill-starred purchase." But I knew Andrew Lang much more closely than I ever knew Henley, who, cripple as he was, ailed too much in health to be inclined to haunt bookshops. Lang lived at Marlowe Road, Kensington, when he was not playing golf at St. Andrews. He came to me very often during the long period of our acquaintance, in quest of the fairy-tale, and I was able to be of use to him in the preparation of those delightful children's books which came out year by year, the Blue Fairy Book, the Red, the Green, the Purple . . .

I never came across writing so undecipherable

as Andrew Lang's. It took me long hours to make out his notes, and for that matter, his cheques! How on earth the compositors managed with his "copy" at the "Daily News" office I don't know. There are collectors who bought the manuscripts of his "Daily News" leaders, and paid me £20 for each of them, but they could have been no wiser than I am. He was a very spare, thin, upright man, with a most charming manner. Sir James Barrie has lately spoken of his sweet nature, that we all divined. His knowledge of out-of-the-way books was amazing, and I am glad to be able to say that on my premises he found volumes which he told me he had vainly searched London for. The prices of Lang's own works have shown signs of falling since his death. He wrote so many, and the "eclectic" kind of collector prefers to gather together only the pick of a writer's volumes to represent any author not of the highest rank. The world holds such vast quantities of them, and the shelves of one's library hold so few!

CHAPTER XVI

Walter Pater, Richard Jefferies, and the Gissings. Tennyson and Francis Thompson. The "Grand Old Man" and Kingsley. Rudyard Kipling and "Serjeant What's His Name."

Walter Pater, George Gissing and Richard Jefferies came so often into my shop for a business moment and remained for a friendly, talk-filled hour that I think of them less as my customers than as my good friends. For I need not remark here that every bookseller worthy of his trade divides his visitors into these two kinds, nor values the familiar friend less because he spends never a penny in the shop, while the customer will spend many a pound. I can see Mr. Pater now with his fierce, heavy moustache that made you feel he was going to snarl at you, and yet he proved as gentle-spoken and gracious-mannered as a book-lover should be. He was an exceedingly shy man. The spectacle of so many volumes in my shop seemed to overwhelm him, and it was an effort for him to ask me to get the book he was looking for, as though he were anxious lest I should be put to some trouble. Occasionally he was accompanied by the gentleman who was later

to be his executor. The contrast between the two men was provoking. Not that Mr. Pater was shabby, or untidy, in reality; but he appeared so when standing alongside that spickish, stylish man of the world.

I was never quite able to fathom Richard Jefferies. He was as retiring in his way as Walter Pater was, though in the case of the author of "Marius" you felt it was a natural shyness, while the author of "The Gamekeeper at Home" seemed hardly ever at the ease you instinctively expected from his type. Perhaps his rather delicate health had something to do with it. When he died I purchased many books, pamphlets and manuscripts from his widow. Among them were a number of political pamphlets, such as "Jack Brass" and "Suez-Side," "The World's End" and his first book, "The Scarlet Shawl." These were all written before Jefferies found himself. Many of my customers have expressed very poor opinions of his work previous to "The Gamekeeper at Home," and it is, I believe, quite worthless. Still, Jefferies is Jefferies, and I paid a guinea apiece for those early books. Although Jefferies is not read much in these latter years, I believe he will some day be much sought after, in spite of the curious vagaries associated with his book-prices. The "Gamekeeper at Home," was once valued at £2 5s.; to-day the price of a good copy is only fifteen shillings. Nine of his books, however, remain at the price of fifty shillings to three pounds each.

There was a period during which I prophesied exactly the same thing about the works of Mr. George Moore. In 1885, Newman and Company, the publishers of Mr. Moore's two volumes of verse "Pagan Poems" and "Flowers of Passion," became either bankrupt or sold their business, though after so many years I cannot remember which. At any rate, I was able to acquire all the remaining copies of these two obscure volumes—at three pence each! Unfortunately there were not many of them, and I offered them for sale at tenpence. A racing tipster in a daily newspaper does not show less insight than book-collectors did in those days. It was difficult to find customers. To-day "Pagan Poems" and "Flowers of Passion" are worth £30 a copy.

The romance of the Gissing books does not depend on any single vagary: it is the record of a dozen vagaries. I knew George Gissing himself very well. He spent many an hour browsing among my books, or talking about them, between the years 1883 and 1885. He lived quite near to my shop in Boziers Court, then lying off the Tottenham Court Road, but now demolished. He always seemed to be lingering about New Oxford Street. In those days my shop did not close until ten o'clock, and Gissing was always the last to depart.

He never appeared to be able to buy books for himself. He looked very shabby, with a quiet, depressed air. He was slimly built and youthful-

mannered, though he was not given to smiling much, as though all the trouble of the world had concentrated on him and deprived him of the gift of turning up the corners of his mouth. I was very glad when I noticed later how much more successful he was becoming. But what irony there is in the fact that last year I sold a copy of his first novel, "Workers in the Dawn," in three volumes, for a hundred pounds!

George Gissing's brother, Mr. Algernon Gissing, is still in touch with my shop. Physically he and the author of "Demos" are worlds apart. Of medium height, and, though gray, the picture of health, Mr. Algernon Gissing is one of those men who arrest everybody's attention when they come into a room. It is through his kind co-operation that I became the possessor of a set of first editions of his brother's novels, each of them a presentation copy with autograph inscription. One is especially interesting: "From 7 k," it reads (on the fly-leaf of "The Nether World," volume one) "to Smallbrook Cottage, September 1889." I asked Mr. Gissing what these words signified. "My brother was living in a flat," he answered, "7 k Cornwall Residences, by Baker Street Station. They are re-numbered now and called 'Mansions.' My cottage was at Smallbrook."

"Another volume, 'Eric's Ransom' (1895)," went on Mr. Gissing, "is inscribed 'to the household at Wellesley,' for I and my family had then moved to that place." "Workers in the

Dawn," an autographed first edition in three volumes, 1880, "by George R. Gissing" (Remington and Co., publishers), is inscribed: "Algernon Fred Gissing, with G. R. G.'s affectionate regards, London, May 28, 1880."

My collection of manuscripts, published or unpublished, by George Gissing, is, I think, unique. There is the unpublished MS., "All for Love," written in 1880, complete in fifty-eight pages. Then comes the MS. of "Phoebe's Fortune," in 27 pages quarto, fully signed—the story appeared in "Temple Bar," March, 1884. "Mortimer's Choice," 18 pages, fully signed, is another unpublished MS., as is "The Hope of Pessimism," in 28 pages quarto, which appears to me to be of much importance.

Other manuscripts, in George Gissing's writing, which have never been put into type, are "Alongshore," of six pages quarto, and "The Quarry on the Heath," with an additional fair copy in the author's hand, autographed and dated 1881. Then I have the MSS. of "Isabel Clarendon," 1885 (243 pages): "By the Ionian Sea," and "Charles Dickens": also a remarkable MS. of "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft," complete in fifty pages. This latter, of course, is not the complete book. The manuscript itself has been revised most carefully: it is written throughout in a tiny, not over precise hand, and some of the changes are difficult to make out. But those which I can understand seem to me to add enormously to the literary value of the published

book. The preface reveals that originally the supposed writer's name was spelt " Wrycroft " instead of " Ryecroft." And such passages as this have been carefully crossed out : " Once he told me that he had accustomed himself to the idea of ending his life in a workhouse. For that reason, among many others, he wished to escape from London. A country workhouse, he thought would be endurable : those in London——"

The differences between the preface in manuscript and as actually printed are even more striking. When, originally, Ryecroft got his annuity he established himself in a cottage " on the slope of the Mendips, hard by the beautiful city of Wells," so that " his friends went down into Somerset to see him." Not Devon, as in the published work. And the cosy " book-room " eventually had a fine view across the valley of the Exe to Haldon, not " towards Glastonbury Tor," as in the manuscript. Originally Ryecroft's end was violent : " a countryman found him lying dead, stricken by lightning." And above all, the first title of the book had been " An Author at Grass : Extracts from the Private Papers of Henry Wrycroft." The alteration here necessitated the deletion of a paragraph at the close of the preface, following " I will serve " :

" As for the title chosen, I remembered that, in the first letter my friend wrote me from his retreat, he signed himself ' An Author at Grass.' It well enough befits the kindly-natured man, who had learned not to take himself too seriously."

There are so many changes in the book proper from its manuscript that I hesitate to make any attempt to describe them. They are sufficient to make an enthralling descriptive essay. But here is one short passage that never appeared in print, although it seems to have been intended. It occurs in section XIV., " Spring," where the newspaper reference to a horse-race meeting fills Ryecroft with loathing : " yet, desiring above all things to be reasonable and just, I ask myself whether it is a mere baseless prejudice, this contempt and hatred with which I have always regarded the national sport. Perhaps horse-racing is innocent, even good, in itself : and if the winner's guerdon were a crown of wild olives I might take as much pleasure in it as any other man. But I am reminded of a passage jotted down in my old note-book :

" ' At Tennyson's funeral, Royalty was represented by a Court-Official, being itself unable to attend.' The Prince of Wales spent the day at Newmarket, where he bestowed upon a winning jockey the honour of a personal congratulation."

" Many of the Ryecroft reminiscences are my own," declares George Gissing, in a beautiful letter which he wrote to a correspondent in 1903, and which came into my possession at a price which would surprise those who are not aware of the swift leap in prices of Gissing relics : " but much of the book is imagination. No college near Exeter is mine—would that it were ! One

puts into literary form hopes which are not very likely to be realized."

. . . . . .

Alfred Tennyson and Francis Thompson, two poets, who in different ways left illustrious names, were frequently to be seen in the neighbourhood of New Oxford Street. Nobody recognised Thompson, except perhaps a journalist on "The Times," who told me that once he saw him on the pavement nearly opposite Mudie's. So desolate did the author of "The Hound of Heaven" appear to be that he went up to him, presuming on their slight acquaintance, and said:

"Come with me, Thompson, into the Victoria Cafe, and we'll have a meal."

Poor Thompson looked himself up and down, evidently feeling that he was not much of a guest for the Victoria. But the journalist's persuasion was successful in the end, and Thompson enjoyed that dinner immensely. It was during their subsequent talk that Thompson confessed New Oxford Street "put a spell on him." Then he became grave and said that he felt he would never lift the pen again as he used to lift it. "The best work I can ever hope to do was done five years ago. I have lost the power to write." Then he brightened again, and my friend remembers that evening's converse as the finest he ever had in his life.

Everybody recognised Lord Tennyson, with his dignified presence, his rare head and powerful face. He would come slowly and with sure step

into my shop, turning always to the shelves of the classics, and no one who heard him will forget his rich organ-noted voice. He spoke slowly, choosing his words as though he was composing. In my next chapter I want to recall a famous evening in which Tennyson had a unique share, and the magnificent souvenir of it that is now in my possession. Contemporaries of his, who only just escaped running into each other and into him in New Oxford Street were Charles Kingsley and William Ewart Gladstone. On his flying visits from Eversley the parson-novelist would often call at James Westall's for volumes of history and poetry. A good lyric gave him great satisfaction, and he would shout his discovery across the shop; but all the same he told us in "Alton Locke" that a poet was incompletely equipped until he could have a pension as well as a pen.

Mr. Gladstone called oftener at that shop of Westall's across the way than on me, for Mr. Westall's collection of theological works could not be rivalled. When the "G. O. M." entered the shop Mr. Westall would lead him in state to a corner where a wall of books sheltered him from the vulgar gaze that was already making itself a nuisance outside on the quickly crowding pavement. The old bookseller was, I believe, a capital man at his trade, although it is said he had never read a book. However, he would take up some heavy old religious work and say: "Mr. Gladstone, I have saved this book for you. I have not read it myself, but am told that it will

suit you. Now, sir, just sit in the chair behind them books, and you can just enjoy yourself and tell me whether you would like to keep it. They tell me it's a ' find '."

Other premiers have entered my own unpretentious portals, but I would give Gladstone first place as a learned bookman who was also a politician, except, perhaps, Lord Morley of Blackburn. Mr. Gladstone had wide interests and sympathies outside his theology. His scholarship, or the little of it I was privileged to see, was profound. True, I remember selling him an old hymnology more clearly than I remember selling him anything else, but I know there were others. Greek life and literature (including his favourite Homer) and Latin classics were merely a holiday study, and he kept himself well informed about the writings of his contemporaries. Or shall we say, *they* kept him well-informed ! His familiar bag, which he always carried with him on his journeys to a bookshop, was not merely used to take away books. He received so many gift copies from the authors of his time that, having no room for their storage, he would bring a dozen with him for the purpose of exchange, perhaps for a single volume more to his liking.

Other authors than Mrs. Humphry Ward owed their success to Mr. Gladstone's commendation, and books from literary aspirants must have fallen around him as thick as leaves in Vallombrosa. Therefore, Mr. Westall in particular was honoured by the visits of the great statesman and his bag of

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books. Their value would be mutually agreed upon, and set against future purchases, probably to be made from the next Westall catalogue. For Mr. Gladstone had ever a watchful eye on booksellers' catalogues. It was his practice to mail a catalogue back to the bookseller after ticking on the margin the items he required, and signing his name on the concluding page.

I was told a very amusing story by Mr. Westall arising out of one of Mr. Gladstone's visits with his bag of books. A customer less eminent examined the volumes Mr. Gladstone had sold, immediately after the great man's departure. The book he selected and purchased had an enhanced interest on account of its interesting inscription from the author to Mr. Gladstone. The purchaser went rejoicing on his way with no thought of the perturbation of mind which was to follow for old Mr. Westall. For the turnover had been too prompt. The transaction had only just taken place when Mr. Gladstone returned to impress upon Mr. Westall his customary request that his name or the inscriptions to him should be removed from the books before they were offered for sale. Thereupon the forgetful bookseller remembered the rule, and was greatly concerned on account of a sale which, had it come to light, would look uncomfortably like a delinquency on his part. For a long time the bookseller's strenuous endeavour to recover the volume was evenly matched by a resolve on the purchaser's part to keep it ! That the latter had the

proverbial nine points of the law in his favour, and rather more, must be conceded. But finally he relented. A highly-priced book on Mr. Westall's shelves excited his interest and he was by no means averse to an exchange. Thus the affair ended to the satisfaction of both parties—especially to that of the old bookseller, for to tell the truth, he was rather too over-awed by the "G. O. M." He used to say, before anyone learnt that Queen Victoria said something like it, that Mr. Gladstone never conversed; whenever he opened a subject he lectured.

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On several occasions Mr. Rudyard Kipling sent his secretary to my shop for first editions of his own books, evidently to make up a set. That is my nearest approach to any acquaintance with him, and I only speak of such a trivial point as an introduction to something that concerns both Mr. Kipling and myself much more nearly. My brother-in-law was a sergeant in the Northumberland Fusiliers during the Boer War and went out twice to South Africa. On the second occasion he was appointed Mess-Sergeant to the author of "Barrack Room Ballads," who was acting as a war correspondent. Mr. Kipling grew very fond of his servant, although he did not even know his name, addressing him always simply as "Sergeant." It amused the famous author greatly when he became conscious of this: whereupon he wrote the poem "Sergeant What's His Name," and presented my brother-in-law with the manuscript.

Sergeant Sheppard went out afterwards to Omdurman and Crete with Kitchener. Then he retired as a pensioner, but when the war with the Central Powers began he volunteered for fresh service. For a time he was engaged in training young soldiers at Dover. After fifteen months of this work he came into my shop one day on leave and said wearily, "I can't stand it any longer. I have tried to put up with them, but so many of them seem utterly hopeless, and have such bad tempers! They *can't* be taught." So he put in an application for active service and was killed in the first battle at Loos.

I think Mr. Kipling might like to know what became of his old servant.

CHAPTER XVII

Swinburne and his Landlady. His Funeral, and Theodore Watts-Dunton. My Evenings at the Pines. My visits to Robert Browning. A wonderful copy of "Maud." At Tea with W. M. Rossetti. Meredith at my Shop. How a Bonfire was made of his Manuscripts. The Masterworks under the Gardener's Bed. Thomas Hardy, and the First Editions hawked in the Streets.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE would come storming into my shop at midday, looking pasty-white either from bad temper or a less fleeting complaint, and complaining in his shrillest voice that the landlady of his rooms close by in Great James Street had wakened him at eleven o'clock although he expressly told her he must be left undisturbed till twelve.

It appeared to have become a habit of hers. Perhaps she was one of the unrecognised pioneers of "Summer Time." When, a few years afterwards, Theodore Watts-Dunton carried Swinburne away with him to live at Putney he did a greater service than he knew: for anything might have happened to that landlady. Although just forty years have passed since the poet began those morning visits to my shop, I can see him vividly

now, an extraordinary man, abnormally shy when his excitement had calmed down. He never seemed to desire anyone to speak to him, and certainly he wanted no-one to be told who he was, although he inevitably attracted attention through the eccentricity of his velvet cape and dress. After he removed to Putney I did not see him. He sent messages to me, and ordered books from my catalogue through a local newsagent.

After Swinburne's death I purchased the MSS. of some of the choruses of "Atalanta in Calydon" at Christie's sale-room. One day Mr. James Douglas, a friend of Mr. Watts-Dunton and a well-known journalist, now editor of the "Sunday Express," called at my shop and presented Mr. Watts-Dunton's compliments. Would I dine with him at "The Pines," and take with me the "Atalanta" MS. for him to look at? I excused myself from dinner, joining him afterwards. During the evening he showed me the manuscript of "Under the Microscope," by Swinburne in reply to Robert Buchanan's "The Fleshly School of Poetry," in which the poet of "Poems and Ballads" is, of course, severely pilloried. The MS. of "Under the Microscope," by the way, contains several violent Swinburnian expressions that were omitted from all but a few copies of the printed essay. In one of these Tennyson is called a "strumpet!"

"If it is not a rude question," I said, "will you sell this MS.?"

"What would you offer for it?" was his answer.

" A hundred pounds," I said.

He was astonished. " If you had offered twenty I would have closed with you." From that time, regularly for the next six months, I was invited to Putney. In all I think I went three or four times a week, sometimes on Sundays. On each occasion I made a purchase : there were about twelve unpublished poems and odd manuscript pages, as well as the MS. of " A Channel Passage and other Poems." Then there were the manuscript of his study of Ben Jonson and five or six versions of the essay on Victor Hugo, only one of which has been published. Watts-Dunton was a strange old man, and would not show me more than a few things at a time. I need hardly say that I accepted everything he offered, the whole costing me a pretty large sum.

We became very friendly. So friendly indeed that he took me eventually into Swinburne's own library on the second floor of the house and arranged with me to classify and catalogue the books for him. A further purchase of mine was several drawings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, which had belonged to Swinburne. When I realised at the end of all these talks and transactions how feeble Mr. Watts-Dunton was becoming, I felt glad that he had never been told the true story of Swinburne's funeral, because it would have cut him to the heart.

When Swinburne died I was staying at my home in Shanklin, in the Isle of Wight. It had been decided to bury him at Bonchurch, where

his father had presented the church with the grounds for a graveyard, one plot of which was reserved for his own family. Five spaces had been marked out for the five Swinburne children, and three of them were already used. Algernon was the fourth to go, and Isabel was not long in following him. I helped to line the grave with moss.

Theodore Watts-Dunton was too ill with influenza to attend the funeral. But he sent word to the officiating clergyman forbidding him absolutely to take the body into the church, forbidding also the placing of flowers or leaves in the tomb. I think he must also have asked that no service should be read over the coffin, but although the vicar respected his other wishes, he insisted on conducting the usual ceremony at the graveside. While he was reading there was an arrival from London, who broke in on the scene with vehement protests. The old clergyman had the good sense to proceed with the service as though nothing untoward was happening, thereby averting the unpleasant scene that everyone was beginning to fear.

. . . . . .

I had the privilege of paying several visits to Robert Browning's house in De Vere Gardens, Kensington, during the winter of 1886. From time to time he had ordered some valuable books from my catalogues, and they were too precious to send in the ordinary way. He always received me in the library, a dim room of shadows. His manner was bluff and pleasant, though tinged

with soberness since, I believe, Mrs. Browning's death. I remember that he collected many out-of-the-way books, including some first editions of the works of Walter Savage Landor. Lest it be pointed out that Landor is not "out-of-the-way," I add that Browning's selections were the Latin and Greek Landors.

The sale of the De Vere Gardens library did not take place until Browning's son died, years after his father. I was able to purchase several valuable and interesting relics. But it was through another source that I acquired my best Browning book, one which I have refused all offers for, so highly I esteem it: not one of his own volumes, but the most interesting copy of Tennyson's "Maud" in existence. Browning students may remember that on one occasion the laureate read his famous poem to Mr. and Mrs. Browning and Dante Gabriel Rossetti at the Brownings' earlier home. Miss Browning was also present. It is the actual volume that Tennyson used for the reading that is in my possession.

He presented it to Mrs. Browning with his autographed inscription: "Elizabeth Barrett Browning from A. Tennyson." Added in *different* ink, but by the *same* hand, are the words "Robert &" before the "Elizabeth." To the left of Tennyson's signature is: "Monday September 27th. 13 Dorset Street, Manchester Square."

As Tennyson was reading, Dante Rossetti drew a portrait of him, holding the book before his

eyes. The drawing is done in pen and ink, with an inscription at the top in the artist's hand : " I hate the dreadful hollow behind the little wood " —the opening line of the poem. On the back of the drawing is an autographed description by Browning of the occasion, which reads :

" Tennyson read his poem of ' Maud ' to E. B. B., R. B., Arabel and Rossetti, on the evening of Thursday Septr 27th, 1855, at 13 Dorset St., Manchester Square. Rossetti made this sketch of Tennyson as he sat reading to E. B. B., who occupied the other end of the sofa. —R. B. March 6, '74, 19 Warwick Crescent, *Μεταπιπτοντος σαιμονος.*"

In a letter to Miss Mitford, author of " Our Village," Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote shortly afterwards : " One of the pleasantest things which has happened to us here is the coming down on us of the Laureate, who, being in London for three or four days from the Isle of Wight, spent two of them with us, dined with us, smoked with us, opened his heart to us (and the second bottle of port), and ended by reading ' Maud ' through from end to end, and going away at half-past two in the morning. If I had had a heart to spare, certainly he would have won mine. He is captivating with his frankness, confidingness, and unexampled *naïveté* ! Think of his stopping in ' Maud ' every now and then— ' There's a wonderful touch ! That's very tender. How beautiful that is ! ' Yes, and it *was* wonderful, tender, beautiful, and he read exquisitely

in a voice like an organ, rather music than speech."

I will only add here that another Rossetti, William Michael, was known to me for many years. I accepted very often his warm invitation to drink tea at his house at Primrose Hill. I was able to purchase from him a good many drawings by his brother, Dante Gabriel, and also the easel before which the painter had worked. I went over William Rossetti's library so many times that I knew it almost by heart. One afternoon I had the pleasure of meeting his daughter, Mrs. Angelo, who is still with us. Her father was a most interesting talker, and though he was over eighty years old when I spent those delightful tea-times with him his intellect was unimpaired.

. . . . . .

The impression I retain of George Meredith is of his keen figure entering my shop like his own Spartan, "supple as the Scythian's bow, braced as the string." For a long time before his death, of course, I missed those memorable visits, and I seldom heard from him, though I heard a good deal of him. Happily enough, I was able to oblige his daughter, Mrs. Henry Sturgis, by supplying her with sets of Meredith's works to present to her two daughters.

After the funeral of Meredith an American enthusiast, Mr. Edmund Brooks, of Minneapolis, asked me to arrange, if possible, a visit to the house at Box Hill. I obtained the kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. Sturgis to call there, and

we journeyed out in a car. Meredith's nurse, Miss Adelaide Nichol, showed us the room in which the great novelist had passed away. I was deeply impressed with the simplicity of the room ; it contained hardly any furniture except an ordinary three-foot iron bedstead. The occasion of our visit took place only a week or two after the event, and Miss Nichol was still very upset over the loss of one who had been a good master. She told us, the tears running down her face, that Meredith had arranged to make a journey to Littlehampton on the day of his death, but in the meantime he took a chill while out riding in the donkey-chaise, and the end came quickly.

George Meredith placed no value whatsoever on the manuscripts of his novels.[1] Once when he said so to Miss Nichol she answered teasingly that it was mock modesty on his part to say such a thing. To this Meredith merely gave her an instruction : to make a bonfire of manuscripts at the end of the garden ! " And he was set on it too," she told us.

" But," she pleaded, " can't I have some of them as keepsakes ?"

[1] Mrs. Sturgis, who has generously read through this portion of Mr. Spencer's book, confirms the fact referred to. " When I went down to the little chalet in which my father wrote his books, I often saw him screw up a sheet of discarded manuscript and use it as a spill to light his pipe." Mrs. Sturgis allows me to state, however, that on one occasion, after Meredith was reminded that he had never given to her nor to her brother, Mr. William Meredith, any manuscript of his work, he presented to his son the MS. of " Celt and Saxon," and to his daughter the MSS. of " The Egoist " and " One of our Conquerors." The two last-named works are now lent for exhibition to the British Museum.—EDITOR.

"Yes," he answered carelessly, "take whichever you like."

She selected several of the precious documents —single sheets on which he had written out his short poems. Miss Nichol led Mr. Brooks and me down into the vegetable garden, and there, a black little heap of ashes, lay all that remained of manuscripts worth who knows how much!

As a matter of fact, before Meredith died he took into consideration the prospect that his MSS. might some day become commercially valuable, and he did so in an extremely thoughtful and characteristic fashion. His nurse, who had served him faithfully for seven years, and his manservant, who had served him for thirty years, were each left with a manuscript that, if ever they found themselves in need, they would be able to convert into money. I asked Miss Nichol if she thought it likely that she would ever offer for sale the MSS. in her own possession, and she answered evasively: "I will let you know as soon as I make up my mind." Meanwhile she consoled me by presenting me with the last pencil Meredith had used —an indelible pencil, which, of course, I still retain.

Unfortunately for me, instead of keeping in touch with Miss Nichol as I would have done had I been so commercially-minded a bookseller as some folk are inclined to think me, I let the matter lie until, in looking through a catalogue which had just reached me from Sotheby's rooms, I noticed Miss Nichol's MSS. offered for sale at

their forthcoming auction. I managed to gain possession of two of these at £300 each—" The Amazing Marriage," in two versions, of which only one has been published. Miss Nichol's manuscripts, I remember, realised £1800 altogether.

When first I saw Miss Nichol she told me that while she was burning those manuscript-sheets in the grounds at Box Hill, Meredith's manservant, Mr. Frank Cole, seeing the fire, hurried to his master's room and asked if he also might keep a little of the doomed MSS. Now Miss Nichol and Mr. Cole were slightly estranged ; he imagined that Miss Nichol was superseding him in Meredith's regard, although his service had lasted four times the length of hers. Moreover, despite that their master was extremely tactful always in keeping a proper balance between them, I believe that for a long time the two servants had not spoken to one another. When Meredith gave his consent to Mr. Cole's request the latter went running down the garden, grasped a sheaf of papers without a word to her, and carried them off. " *He* might have something to sell you at once," she suggested.

We found Meredith's old servant in his cottage half a mile away. I explained the purpose of our visit, and said that we would esteem it a favour if he would show us anything he possessed that had belonged to the great novelist.

" Nay," he answered, " there is nothing that I know of except a parcel of papers."

" Well," said I, " would you be kind enough to show us the parcel ? "

He turned to the staircase doorway.

"Mother," he called out, "will you bring down that bundle of papers wrapped up in a newspaper under the bed?"

The old lady passed the bundle down to him. It contained some valuable manuscript! We thanked Mr. Cole for the trouble he had taken, and said that in me, if ever he thought of selling the manuscript, a good purchaser might be found.

He was just as guarded in his reply as Miss Nichol had been, saying that he would think the matter over. It did not seem to me quite the proper thing that I should write tempting letters of persuasion to such a simple man, and thus Mr. Pierpont Morgan was able to forestall me by offering an irresistible sum of money for all the MSS. the manservant possessed. Mr. Morgan's London agent made the transaction, and this explains why they never came into Sotheby's catalogue, as did the MSS. of Meredith's nurse.

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Mr. Thomas Hardy has visited London so rarely during the past twenty years that the chances of his making his way into a bookshop are infinitesimal. But he has been a customer of mine, none the less. Twenty years ago he was searching for Latin Vulgates with, as he put it in a letter to me, "the type fairly clear for eyes not so strong as they were." It chanced that I was busy at the time, gathering together for a collection in America copies of the work (first editions) of the chief living

authors, for a presentation library on behalf of a good cause, and I was asked if I could get the authors themselves to sign their own volumes. I had been successful in fifty or sixty cases, but I remember that there were two authors who sent a refusal, though neither of them would have been pleased had they known that their two minds shared a single thought: they were Miss Marie Corelli and the late Henry James.

I took advantage of our correspondence to ask Mr. Hardy if he would consent to join the list of those who had signed their volumes. His reply, dated "13 : 9 : 1902" from Max Gate, Dorchester, was to the effect that: "I will write in the books as you request, since they are not for sale, though I do not care to do so as a rule, the later editions being more correct, some of the early editions not having been read by me in proof." I was so touched by Mr. Hardy's kindness after the aforesaid rebuffs, that I found a Latin Vulgate especially for him as a token of my gratitude. He accepted the gift, to my satisfaction, informing me when he acknowledged it that "the type is clearer than that of the one I formerly used." Incidentally, his signature in the later letters I possess is simply the abbreviation: "T. Hy."

My earliest memory of Mr. Hardy's books is much earlier than that, and how vividly I recall it! His first publisher was John Tinsley, from whom I acquired the parchment deed of copyright of each of the Hardy novels he had published

—" Desperate Remedies," " Under the Greenwood Tree," and " A Pair of Blue Eyes." The novels were an utter failure. Tinsley told me that Mr. Hardy's favourite title was always " Far From the Madding Crowd," and he would have liked to call them all by that name !

John Tinsley printed five hundred copies of each of these three novels, binding fifty to begin with ; and he never sold twenty ! Afterward the remaining four hundred and fifty of each were sold as bulk in their sheets to a barrow-man who hawked cheap books under a naphtha light on Saturday evenings at the corner of Jackson's Road, Holloway Road. To this part of the history of those now world-famed novels I myself was able to be an eye-witness. The barrow-man bound up the three-volume Hardy books in his own particular way—with thick brown paper, making a one-volume affair of them, and there they lay on his stall, jewels among the heaped-up dross. " Now my intellectual friends," his hoarse voice shouted out to the working folk passing by the stall, " here's a three-volume novel published at one pound eleven and six—mark that, one pound eleven and six, and you can have it to-night for fifteen pence ! "

When Mr. Hardy autographed those volumes for me in 1902 the complete set of his first editions was purchasable at £25. To-day, twenty years later, the same set may, with much difficulty, be acquired for four hundred pounds.

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CHAPTER XVIII

My Memory of the Nineties. Ernest Dowson haunts my Bookshop. An Unpublished Book. Smithers, the Publisher. My meetings with Aubrey Beardsley. Sir Richard Burton's "Yellow Breakfasts." Mr. Arthur Symons and John Clare. Oscar Wilde in his Unpublished Letters.

ONLY a bus ride away from my shop we come to the scene of one of the saddest happenings in modern literature, the downfall of Oscar Wilde at the Old Bailey on May 25th, 1895. But we hardly need go so far if we wish to tread the London that was familiar to that ill-fated figure and to those strange-witted contemporaries and associates of his whom we instinctively recall at the mere mention of the eighteen-nineties—though most disproportionately, as we realise when we think of the other men who were writing during the same period.

We hardly need to go so far as the Old Bailey, I say, because several of them lived (and died) in the neighbourhood of Bloomsbury. There was hardly a week that passed for many years when one or other of the group could not have been found entering my shop. Ernest Dowson, Aubrey Beardsley, Sir Richard Burton, Leonard Smithers

—often have I talked with them all. When Dowson was not spending his afternoons among my books he was wasting them at a public-house a little lower down New Oxford Street. Sometimes when he had spent all his money on whisky, he would persuade a crony to come across to me with the manuscript of one of his poems and beg me to give a few shillings for it. He was too ashamed to come himself. Back the messenger would go with the capital that within a very short time would have liquidated itself in further supplies of alcohol. This reluctance of Dowson's to sell his own manuscripts is, I find, shared generally among authors. They prefer other folk to do the sad work in their behalf.

Ernest Dowson was a handsome though rather weak-faced man. He was disinclined to write, although he must have done a fair amount. He made several translations of French authors for Leonard Smithers, a publisher of Wilde's, and he brought to me a translation of the "Memoirs of Richelieu," which I purchased, as I myself was publishing at that time, or at any rate, contemplated doing so. But Dowson's manuscript still remains in my strong box unpublished.

I only knew Leonard Smithers in any personal way during the last few years of his life. The letters written by Oscar Wilde, which I possess and to which I shall presently refer, occasionally throw some light on this rather sordid publisher's general character. When I met Smithers he had already fallen on evil days, and during those final

years I purchased practically everything he had to sell, including his Wilde letters, written from France after the release of Wilde from prison and imploring Smithers to send various outstanding moneys. In one of these, written shortly before Wilde's death, the poet exclaims ; " For God's sake send me at least five pounds by return. I am face to face with starvation and death."

In my shop is a volume by Lord Alfred Douglas, which Smithers published, probably in 1899 : " The Duke of Berwick, a Nonsense Rhyme by the Belgian Hare. Author of Tales with a Twist. Illustrated by Tony Ludovici." On the picture-board cover is a coloured illustration of a duke with a dog, coronets on the ducal head and on the dog's coat. Along with this volume I have the manuscript of the verses in pencil by Lord Alfred himself. " Owing to the failure of the publishers within a week of publication," wrote Douglas elsewhere, " this book never had a life as a real book at all."

Smithers fell so low before he died—a Marlowesque kind of death it was, in the Seven Dials district—that he resorted to desperate methods for the few pounds he needed to keep himself alive. Once he came to me and said :

" Mr. Spencer, I have some epigrams by Oscar Wilde that have never been published. If I print an edition de luxe of a hundred and twenty-five copies illustrated with woodcuts by Aubrey Beardsley, also belonging to me, will you take the whole edition at ten shillings each ? "

I agreed to this, and he promised to deliver them to me as soon as they were printed. They came in several different lots, and I began to think that here was an important new Wilde publication, when I was amazed to find half-a-dozen callers in my shop offering me copies of the little book I was about to issue myself ! Smithers had printed far more than he supplied to me, and made similar arrangements with other booksellers !

I have seen copies of this pamphlet of epigrams sold at a guinea each. The yellow cover reads : " Phrases and Philosophies for the use of the Young by Oscar Wilde, London MCMIII." The Beardsley illustrations came at the beginning and at the end of the thirty-six sayings : and the sayings themselves are entirely characteristic of the man who wrote " The Importance of Being Ernest." " The first duty of life," says Wilde, " is to be as artificial as possible. What the second duty is no one has yet discovered." " Avoid arguments of any kind," he says again, " they are always vulgar, and often convincing." Relations, we are told, are simply a tedious pack of people who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live nor the smallest instinct about when to die. " Morality is simply the attitude we adopt towards people whom we personally dislike." " A truth ceases to be true when more than one person believes in it." And, finally, " to love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance."

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AUBREY BEARDSLEY

Aubrey Beardsley came to my shop for the first time about the year 1890, before he was much known. He was such an extraordinary-looking man, exactly like the signed photograph hanging in my parlour, that I could not help wondering for long who he was. Then came an occasion on which he made a purchase and asked me to put the volume on one side for him, and at last I knew his name. Later on he suggested that he might illustrate a book for me to publish. In those days Beardsley's beautiful decorative work was, I thought, a revelation in art. His later output, that with which everyone is familiar, was entirely different. He had come under the influence of Smithers—and, I must add, Sir Richard Burton.

About 1888 Sir Richard Burton was a frequent visitor to my shop, and I learned a good deal about what he called his " Yellow Breakfasts," held once a week at his rooms, close to my shop. Merry gatherings they seem to have been, and the guests generally included, I think, Swinburne and Whistler, Wilde and Beardsley. The gathering would have spent the night at some club or another, playing cards and drinking. Then they would adjourn at dawn to Burton's for breakfast.

Mr. Watts-Dunton told me that it was from this circle that he rescued Swinburne when he took him away to Putney. " Why," exclaimed Watts-Dunton, " the man couldn't drink more than three brandies without going under the table ! " Sir Richard Burton told me that it was at one of

these parties that Whistler first saw Oscar Wilde. "Who is this damned young Irishman?" he asked in a loud voice while he adjusted his monocle.

One of the best studies of Aubrey Beardsley is that which was written many years ago by Mr. Arthur Symons. I had known Mr. Symons well enough, and long enough, to be of use to him while he was compiling the Clarendon Press edition of the peasant John Clare's poetry in 1907. Among my manuscripts was the "copy" prepared by Clare for "The Rural Muse" of 1835. In addition to the poems printed in that early volume were others which the publishers evidently rejected as unworthy of publication. But Mr. Symons took the manuscript along with him into the country and was able to discover several pieces worth publishing, which had not previously appeared in print. Another loan was a copy of Clare's "Shepherd's Calendar." I have a letter before me now from Mr. Symons in which he writes: "Could you still, as you kindly intimated, lend me this one to print from? If you do not wish the book to go to the printer I will have the poems copied. I am sending my own copies, and I think they will be careful of them." All of which reminds me that on another occasion I had much pleasure in assisting Mr. Downey, who published the authoritative edition of Charles Lever's works in thirty-seven volumes, to make the bibliographical compilations.

When Mr. Edmund Brooks, the Minneapolis bookseller and excellent friend whom I have

already mentioned in this volume, desired the acquaintance of Mr. Symons so that he could arrange with him to write something especially for publication by him, I was able to arrange a meeting. I remember well how he, Mr. and Mrs. Symons and I dined together at Hampton Court. The outcome of the event was " London : A Book of Aspects," of which book Mr. Brooks presented me with a copy bound in full morocco. It is out of my reach, however, at the moment, being on my " gift-copy " bookshelves away in the Isle of Wight.

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And now I come to Oscar Wilde himself. I knew both Wilde and his mother. Indeed it was at Lady Wilde's house in Bryanston Street, Marble Arch, that I first met them both. In 1886 Lady Wilde ordered some books on Irish antiquities from one of my catalogues, and when acknowledging their receipt she invited me to view her library. I called at the house and was shown into a room whose walls were crowded with books from floor to ceiling, and in many places along the floor.

Lady Wilde received me in state : that is, she welcomed me from a dais at the far end of the room, like a queen on a throne. " Look round, Mr. Spencer," she said regally, " and tell me what you would wish to buy."

I picked out a few good volumes, including Browning's " Bells and Pomegranates." I said : " What will you take for these, your ladyship ? "

She answered with splendid indifference, "Whatever you offer, Mr. Spencer, whatever you offer."

So I suggested £10. She seemed pleased and accepted it readily, saying that I might visit her once a fortnight at eleven in the morning as long as I felt there was a parcel worth giving £10 for! Thus it came about that I saw a good deal of the pathetic, faded old lady.

Was it coincidence, or design, that brought her son Oscar driving up in a cab to the house on every occasion I called there with money for his mother after that initial visit? There he was, entering the library with a sunflower in his buttonhole, and a length of ribbon flying for a necktie. Flabby, pasty, effeminate he was, even in those days. He chatted with his mother and occasionally passed a remark to me, but always as if talking were too much trouble; and not merely talking, but breathing or, indeed, living! I never think of that curious figure without being reminded of the old song:

> "... Old china blue,
> With a bright sunflower
> He'd play by the hour,
> He was utterly, utterly, utter-too-too."

After Wilde's death I purchased the MSS. of "Lady Windermere's Fan" and "A Woman of No Importance," by private treaty. The two plays were written in ordinary cheap exercise books. They were bought for very small sums,

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and I sold them for very small sums. To-day they are each worth a hunded times as much as I bought and sold them for. The manuscripts differ from the published versions, several lines being omitted. One was, I remember, " It proves he wasn't the son of his own father."

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Oscar Wilde's first publication was " Ravenna," the Newdigate Prize poem recited by him in the Oxford Theatre on June 26th, 1878. In my possession is a first edition, bound in green paper cover, and inscribed : " To Helen Faucit, Homage from the Author, Ravenna 1877, Oxford 1878." Along with it, also autographed in Wilde's writing, " To my friend George Fleming, author of ' The Nile Novel and Mirage,' " is a copy of the " Irish Monthly " for July, 1877, published in Dublin by M. H. Gill and Son, and containing Wilde's signed essay " The Tomb of Keats."

My copy of " The Sphinx " (London 1894, Elkin Mathews and John Lane, at the Sign of the Bodley Head) contains an autograph inscription in Wilde's most beautiful hand ; " Eugene Lee Hamilton from his friend the author. In memory of one delightful afternoon and many delightful sonnets. June, 1894." This edition was limited to two hundred copies, which makes my copy rare enough in any case : but its value is considerably enhanced by the two loose sheets of paper accompanying it. One is a statement of account, dated February 12th, 1895, from the publishers, addressed to Wilde at 16 Tite Street, Chelsea ;

showing the number of copies of "The Sphinx" in stock, "as per last statement September 29, 1894" to be eleven "lp" copies and 131 "sp" copies, of which one "lp" copy at 87s. 6d. has been sold and nine "sp" copies at 35s. This throws an interesting light on Wilde's popularity at that time (when his name was on everyone's lips), or the lack of it. The other sheet of paper contains in Wilde's writing six lines from "The Sphinx," which never appeared in the published version:

"Have you no other house of rest
But this that is the house of joy,
And must you { use / ~~make of~~ } me as your toy
And must I hold you to my breast,
And love and loathe you day and night,
And loathe and love you night and day. . ."

Wilde's inscriptions, I always think, were among his happiest achievements. My second edition copy of "The Happy Prince and other Tales," illustrated by Walter Crane and Jacomb Hood and published by David Nutt in 1889, is inscribed in his hand as follows: "In admiration, in friendship. To Mrs. Brown Potter . . . The homage of the author, Oscar Wilde, Paris '99." But the copy of the same volume which I have the greatest pride in owning is a first edition copy of the same book (1888), presented by Wilde to John Ruskin, with a four-page letter inserted. Here we see Wilde's script again at its most

charming, and his sentiment also. The letter is written from Tite Street. He tells Mr. Ruskin that he need hardly say how grateful he will be if the famous critic finds in it any charm or beauty. "The dearest memories of my Oxford days are my walks and talks with you, and from you I learned nothing but what was good. How else could it be? There is in you something of prophet, of priest, and of poet, and to you the gods gave eloquence such as they have given to none other, so that your message might come to us with the fire of passion, and the marvel of music—making the deaf to hear and the blind to see." He wishes that he had something better to give, but such as it is he craves that Mr. Ruskin will take it with his love.

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Perhaps it will be of interest if I add here, as a footnote to these desultory remarks on Wilde's books, that I have found, ironically enough, that the most valuable editions from the collector's standpoint are those which have been pirated! There is "Vera," for example, a play in 1882 of which only two or three copies were printed. This was pirated about 1890 along with several other Wilde volumes, and as a result thousands of pounds were lost to the Wilde estate. A copy of the original "Vera" fetches thirty or forty pounds.

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As I linger once again over my sheaf of letters that Wilde wrote (incidentally no one of

them is dated !) before and after his fall, I realize more clearly that he was a man whose glamour as an artist will never tarnish for the book-lover, " coxcombry " though it be called. " Coxcombry " it is certainly not, if we examine it more than superficially. There are, of course, several examples of the " cleverly smart." But the letter to the Hon. Mrs. Singleton (" Violet Fane," already mentioned by me), is clever in a different sense. It is prompted by Wilde's editorship of a woman's journal for which he has requested a poem. He hopes that Mrs. Singleton has thought about a prose article also. He still thinks that a capital essay might be written on " The Demoralizing Influence of Nature," though much will be forgiven the Dame, seeing that she has already inspired Mrs. Singleton's sonnet. " Besides, *you* live between Parnassus and Piccadilly." He adds, " It is those who live in the country whom Nature deteriorates." His final word is a request that his correspondent will come back to town when she is tired of autumn mists, and " be at home at tea-time." With another of his lady friends, Mrs. Brown Potter, he promises to dine " with great pleasure. I am so glad you have come over." But the avowal at the close that he is her sincere admirer does not prevent the whole letter from giving an impression of sprawling slackness. Success and opulence are in the writing of his note to his brother-in-law, the late Texeira de Mattos, written from the Hotel Arundale, Piccadilly, and enclosing a ticket for

a first-night stall—" You are always to be at my first nights ": and they are in his note to Miss Temple from Chelsea, that expresses his regret that he cannot accept Lady Mount-Temple's invitation, as he is going down to Mrs. Palmer's for a few days. A letter of kindly criticism on his mode of living written *from* Mrs. Langtry, undated, in pencil on a half-sheet of unheaded notepaper and signed " The Tiger Lily," has its significance : " I also regret the inevitable consequence of your rash remarks about umbrellas, sticks, etc. However, I am at least able to gaze upon that wonderful product of art that adorns your button-hole and also that of the innocent youth you are inoculating with your fin de siecle ideas."

How pathetic Wilde's earnest ambitious beginnings seem now, in the light of all that followed ! " Mr. Oscar Wilde begs to enclose a sonnet for the approval of the Editor of Macmillan's Magazine." Again, in a letter to Mr. Nicol Dunn, he expresses hesitation about writing for the " Morning Post " as " I fear your paper is anti-Home Rule and I am a most recalcitrant patriot." As regards the subject of the proposed writing, he informs the editor that his work at present is chiefly reviewing. " Any book you send me I shall be happy to do for you." He suggests an essay on Alexander Smith, one of the Scotch poets he admires very much, one who is, he fears, forgotten. Also he would like to write on the Scotch poets between Chaucer and Shakespeare.

" They are so Keats-like." In the meantime he sends a poem, the sequel to which lies in a further note. He writes simply, " If you are *not* going to publish poetry in your paper, will you kindly return my little ' Symphony in Yellow,' as I have been asked to send it elsewhere."

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But whatever value or interest the foregoing letters possess in themselves becomes nothing when we turn to the two communications which he makes from France after his release from prison, one to Leonard Smithers and the other addressed to " My dear Humphreys." The contrast between them is amazing. It is hard to believe that a man should have reached such extremes as Wilde had plainly reached at the two periods in which he wrote them. The actual handwriting emphasises the contrast. The letter to Mr. Arthur Humphreys, written from " Monsieur Sebastian Melmoth, Hotel de la Plage, Bernaval-sur-Mer, Dieppe," is in tiny lettering, very neat and beautiful, and seeming to show deep concern lest any notepaper should be wasted! Apparently the letter is written almost immediately after his return to civil life, for he thanks Mr. Humphreys for the books he so generously and thoughtfully sent to him. " I need not tell you *what* books were to me in prison." Passionately as he had loved literature from boyhood, he had no idea then that some day it would save him, both mentally and physically : each book was as the hand of a friend, it " lifted me out of the mire

of despair and pain where I had, for a whole year, been lying."

He was not ashamed of having been in prison, he goes on to say, strange though it may sound from lips like his. But "I am thoroughly ashamed of having led a life unworthy of an artist, and a great one." He is not interested in "the British view of morals that sets Messalina above Sporus." It is his reckless pursuit of mundane pleasure, his extravagance, his senseless ease, his love of fashion, his whole attitude towards life, that were wrong for an artist. He is not embittered; he is very happy. He has learnt gratitude—a new lesson for him—and a certain amount of humility. "I don't desire riches or wild profligacy any more. I want peace, and I have found it." He hopes some day to do another work of art. In the meantime Mr. Humphreys is requested to use the name and address at the top of the letter—not the name "Oscar Wilde."

The reader of that letter turns from it with a certain feeling of hope and admiration. But, alas, it does not last. There can be no more woeful change in a man's attitude to life than that expressed in every line of the letter to Leonard Smithers—one of those which Smithers brought to me himself. Despair, cynicism, bitterness—the letter expresses nothing else, we have no more of humility and gratitude, and yet the unconquered artist in the man has persisted to the end. For it *is* the end, or very near it—the Hotel d'Alsace

from which it is written on September 10th, 1900, is the house in which he died two months later. There is an appalling looseness about the formation of his words, none of the old pleasure in beautiful handwriting that seemed to have returned when he wrote to Mr. Arthur Humphreys. After a reference to money matters (money was Wilde's obsession in these final years), he asks of Smithers : " Are the creditors howling ? If the wolf is at the door the only thing is to ask him in to dine."

Then : " My dear Neapolitans have returned to Naples and I miss that brown faun with his deep woodland eyes and his sensuous grace of limb. A slim brown Egyptian, rather like a very handsome bamboo walking stick, occasionally serves me drinks at the Cafe d'Egypte, but he does not console me for the loss of the wanton silvern boy of Italy." In a postscript he asks " Why ' jeunes artistes ' ? What has age to do with acting ? " And a flash of the old Wilde comes with his final declaration that the only person in the world who could act his " Salome " is Sarah Bernhardt—" that ' serpent of old Nile ' —older than the Pyramids."

Truly, as Wilde himself said wittily a little later, he was dying beyond his means.

CHAPTER XIX

Whistler, Chelsea, and Walter Greaves. Why I bought the work of an Unknown. And how he became Known. A Mystery "Deal." The "Times" makes a discovery. And (tardily) the Country makes another.

WHOEVER proposed that whenever a new book comes out we should turn to an old one was a personage who might find all the kindred spirits he needed in the neighbourhood of New Oxford Street. Had he made a similar proposal regarding pictures he would see me also among those ranged alongside himself. Not that I look with disfavour on these moderns, but because circumstances, in the leisure of forty years, have made me concentrate on old George Cruikshank, "Phiz," George Baxter, and Hancock, the etcher on glass. Kate Greenaway and Beardsley, Sir Philip Burne-Jones, Bart., Whistler, and Rossetti—these are as near to contemporary artists as I have been able to approach: that is, until thirteen years ago, when I suddenly found myself on the edge of a new discovery, though I am afraid that the chief figure in it cannot now be regarded as more modern than any of the others on my list.

It was in 1909 or 1910 that I first became aware of the intimate friendship which had existed between Whistler, at the middle period of his life, and an artist named Walter Greaves. I was given to understand that Mr. Greaves and his brother Harry had achieved by their paintings and drawings of Thames-side subjects a local reputation quite exceptional. Harry Greaves was no longer living, and his brother was approaching seventy years of age.

They began their careers as artists together in the 'fifties. They had been trained to the river-side business by their father, a prosperous boat-builder, whose house fronted the water at the end of Lindsey Street, as Lindsey Row was called in those far days. Chelsea was then a village, bordering the Thames with a strand of primitive and natural beauty. Turner, Martin, Holman Hunt, and Rossetti, were a few of the famous artists who had been lured by the charm of Chelsea, its river, old wooden bridge and toll-house, its old quaint inns and trees on the water bank, its sunsets ; Lindsey House, and Battersea Church on the far side of the river, Chelsea Old Church on the near side. In summer-time the river was an animated scene of pleasure and festivity, especially during regattas and excursions : nor was the spring of the year left desolate, for the distance rocked with the enthusiasm of boat-race day.

As a Whistler enthusiast, I was from the first very interested to learn that about 1860 the Greaves family had James M'Neil Whistler for

a neighbour, I myself being as willing then as I have been since to purchase anything by or relating to the celebrated painter and etcher. The Greaves' used to row Whistler out on the water, and it was through this that he first became enthusiastic about river-effects. But in 1909 there was no general interest in the work of Walter Greaves: although I am happy to state that since that time the art of Mr. Greaves has been placed in the best light by the ablest critics of our time, and his painting, "Hammersmith Bridge on Boat Race Day," is one of the treasures of the Tate Gallery. Still, it is not for the dealer to step in where the collector fears to tread. The dealer's methods are often criticised by commentators, but they, when upon occasion they envelop themselves in his mantle, act very much as he does, if not exactly so. Many a scholar has chuckled over the lack, in the market place, of Latin and Greek. Those who are in the market-place deplore the deficiency no less than does the scholar, he may be assured. Not long ago a cry of "Shame!" went up from a gathering of well-intentioned dealers when a most brilliant editor gave details of what he had purchased for sixteen shillings. I place no commas round the word *purchased*, for I am sure his money was good, as they say in trade parlance, and had there been competitive bidding he willingly would have paid more. But the competition was not there, and at the time of which I write, there was no competition for the paintings of Walter Greaves.

Mr. Greaves had two sisters, Tinnie and Emmie, the former of whom was Whistler's first sweetheart. But she was so young that her mother put an end to their association. I have before me a letter addressed to myself by Mr. Walter Greaves on January 4th, 1922, from 33 Lillie Road, West Brompton, in which he writes: "Poor Tinnie has passed away, we feel her loss very much." I knew Tinnie and her sister (who is still living in Chelsea, I am glad to say)—I knew them very well, and remember clearly the sensation we caused one evening a few years ago when I escorted them to the theatre and we sat in full view of an audience dressed in the fashion of the twentieth century metropolis, while my companions had not departed from that of Cremorne (their old haunt) in the eighteen-sixties!

Thoroughly old-fashioned they were in all their ways. To meet with them was to imagine oneself suddenly plunged back into the quaint airs and graces of mid-Victorianism. Tinnie Greaves told me how as a schoolgirl she met Whistler first, and he borrowed her lesson-book and drew her portrait on one of its blank pages. She scoffed when he showed it to her, and tore up the drawing before his face, saying, "I could do better than that myself!" Seldom can Whistler have had his work destroyed before his eyes in such a summary fashion. In my shop a letter from him to old Mrs. Greaves is still preserved: it shows clearly the intimate relation that existed between

himself and the family. Apparently he is waiting while an exhibition is in progress, for he tells her that "the show has been fearfully afire, and it has taken all the time to put it out!" He asks if she has not felt the heat at her end of the Lindsey Row. He begs forgiveness for staying away so long, and adds a promise: "I shall come and see you all soon again."

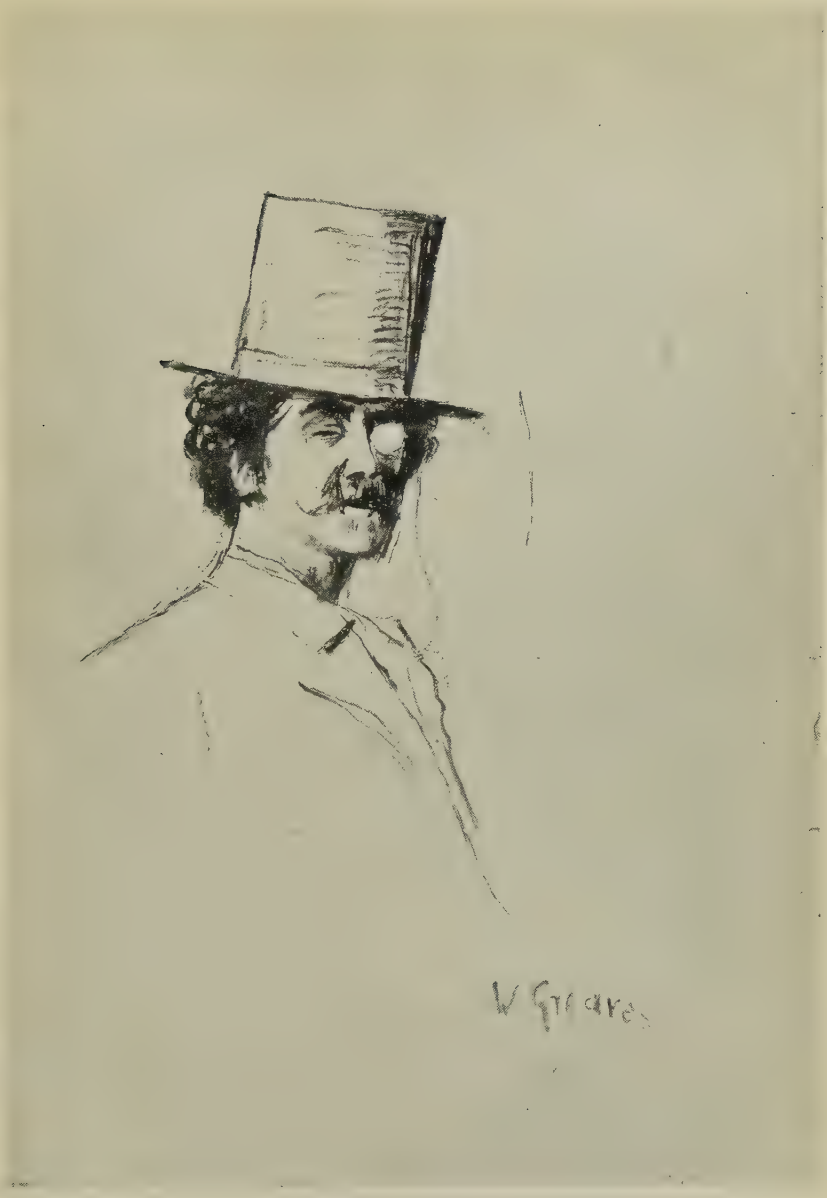
Before 1909 Walter Greaves had no reason to be satisfied with the public's appreciation of his work. True, his paintings were well regarded by folk who remembered the old Chelsea scenes that he had depicted so faithfully, and from the topographical standpoint he has never gone astray. But no one offered high prices for his pictures, and the high priests of art were engaged on more obvious duties than discovering the merit of his work. Otherwise his prices might have been sent up to the level he merited. I have reason to believe, indeed, that it was difficult for him through many years to sell enough work to keep his sisters out of the poorhouse.

Concerning the author of a famous book those words were lately written: "It is strange, and a reproach to his fellow-countrymen, that after the thousands of honours which have been bestowed on the great and on the small, the deserving and the undeserving, in the past forty years, public recognition should still be lacking for the living author of one of the dozen greatest books in the English language." Who?

I will leave the reader guessing at the author's

name while I proceed to point out that the words might have applied and still apply in their broad sense to Walter Greaves, of whom a recent critic said, " He is part and parcel of Chelsea." In any case, to me it seems a remarkable achievement in art for an English youth of sixteen to paint such a masterpiece as " Boat Race Day on Hammersmith Bridge." " Hammersmith Bridge " or no, at the time of which I speak, there was a depressing accumulation of his rolled-up canvases, little cared for and lightly valued by everybody. Some of these he arranged with a local dealer in furniture to try and sell in his shop, and the experiment was a failure. The dealer, knowing of my association with Cruikshank and other artists, came to me and offered some of the pictures. He told me that there was a large number I might have if I felt disposed.

The canvases were in themselves remarkable. They had roughened and frayed at the edges. They were crinkled and crushed, dusty and even damaged in some cases as though they had been neglected and despised for many years. I examined them, it must be confessed, without much interest or enthusiasm at the beginning : and I noticed only casually that on some of them, below the signature, were the words " pupil of Whistler." Yet despite their unprepossessing appearance there was something about them that appealed to me. Therefore, I bought them. I placed the canvases in a room upstairs, and thought no more about them until another lot



To Walter T Spencer
from Walter Greaves

PORTRAIT OF WHISTLER BY WALTER GREAVES

arrived, and another, so that eventually I found myself the possessor of hundreds !

When the supply came at last to an end the dealer asked if Mr. Greaves might paint some pictures at my commission, as he was unable to obtain any work elsewhere, nor would anyone beside myself buy his paintings. I consented, saying that I would take any of his sketches of London. He agreed to execute them at a small fee, on condition that I supplied the canvases, as they were expensive and he could not afford to put out the capital. Thereupon, in order that I might provide the canvas, I told all the old pedlars and hawkers who haunted my shop that I would give them two shillings apiece for any canvas, whether used or not, which they brought to me, on condition that the measurement was not more than two feet square. Mr. Greaves was very pleased with this arrangement, as he was able to use the paint already on the canvases as his background !

At last a day arrived on which Mr. Greaves came to my shop and made himself known to me personally. I was delighted with his quaint and charming company. After hearing him talk, I came to the conclusion that I might rely absolutely on his authority on all matters Whistlerian. There was never a doubt about his verdict. This was by Whistler, or this was not. I know no truer authority upon Whistler's work than he. Mr. Greaves' years are against the strenuousness of a tour through the United States, but, could it

be arranged, his observations on certain "Whistlers" there would be a memorable contribution to the art judgments of our time.

On Sunday I remember taking along with me to Mr. Greaves's house an American customer, who I thought might be interested in the artist. This American gentleman purchased some of his pictures there and then for good prices. Mr. Greaves was so delighted with the sale that he made a contract with me afterwards by which he was to supply to me a further hundred pictures, two or three at a time! It was on that same Sunday, by the way, that he showed me a bundle of Whistler letters. I had imagined that I was already in possession of all the relics of his old master that I could find: consequently I expressed my surprise and offered him fifty guineas for the bundle without taking the trouble to ask what sort of letters it contained. He answered me in a startling fashion: before our eyes he tore the letters up and thrust them into the fire. He explained that they were of an intimate nature.

The action was typical of Walter Greaves, as I learnt afterwards. I have come to know him well enough in subsequent years to appreciate him as the most conscientious of men. He is another of my old Bohemians. Until lately he might have been seen walking proudly along Chelsea embankment, a quaint old figure in a tall hat and frock coat, sporting a flowing silk tie and carrying gloves that he must have worn for fifty years! He has told me that when he and Whistler began

to go bald Whistler hit on the plan of blacking the parts that the dark hair had deserted. They both adopted the practice with great success, using ordinary blacking, and it is whispered that Mr. Greaves continues it to this day !

. . . . . .

Whenever I caught a glimpse of those paintings stored in my upper room I wondered what on earth I could do with them. A long time I wondered, because I needed the space they occupied for new bookcases. Then the unlooked-for happening came along. I mentioned the paintings to a lady who often came to look at prints in my shop, and she went upstairs and spent some hours in examining them. She then asked what I would accept for the whole of the canvases, etc., in the room—I had already separated from them what I considered were the best of the collection, and these were stored on a higher floor and are there still. I named £200 as the figure, and she purchased them, but my self-congratulation had barely time to evaporate before the purchaser returned and asked if I could help her out of what she now regarded as a bad bargain ! Would I, she begged, buy them back from her ? I bethought myself of all I still possessed, and could not see my way to taking them again, as I needed the room so badly and would have no place to store them. But I was not averse to parting with a little sympathy and advice ! " Why don't you try a few in an auction ? " I suggested.

And, sure enough, in the catalogue of a West-end auctioneer there appeared shortly afterwards a brief description of a painting by Walter Greaves that was about to be offered for sale ! This duly came under the hammer : and though I had no interest in the event beyond the wish that my customer might find in it a satisfactory return for her capital investment, I was curious to ascertain the price it fetched. The picture was bought in at seven shillings !

. . . . . .

Matters looked black enough at this stage for the " dealer in futures," so far as concerned the pictures of Walter Greaves. My customer made a final vain appeal to me. With tears in her eyes she told me that they took up so much room that she had to sleep on them ! But soon I was startled into believing that the situation was about to change. And change it did. I was amazed to hear that three of the paintings had realised incredibly high prices—two for £600 first, and then one at £300 ! It must be remembered that at that time Greaves's name on a painting signified nothing to a buyer, and also that the paintings came from my collection. . . .

Still, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good. The next event in this strange, not to say mysterious, development, was the celebrated exhibition of Greaves's work arranged by a sympathetic English patron. It was held in 1911, the year of His Majesty's Coronation, when there was much social activity, so that an unknown

painter's work might easily have been overlooked. But " The Times " of May 5th, 1911, made the success of the exhibition assured. Headed by the title " An Unknown Master," a critical article called attention to the exhibition as that of " a perfectly original artist," and continued : " We understand that Mr. Greaves is an old man, and has lived and painted in London for most of his life. That being so, his obscurity is inexplicable. For he is not an artist who has produced one or two fine works, as it were, by chance. There are fifty paintings of his in the exhibition, and scarcely one of them is not remarkable. At first sight one is struck by their likeness to Whistler's work, and at the same time puzzled by their underlying originality. But soon this originality asserts itself, and the Whistlerian influence seems to be a mere accident. Mr. Greaves has told us that his ' Boat Race Day, Hammersmith Bridge,' was painted when he was sixteen ; and surely no artist at that age has ever painted a more original picture. If it were exhibited without any history attached to it, it would be called Post-Impressionist. The figures crowded on the bridge are painted with a primitive naivete, yet they are all subordinated to the main design, while at the same time they preserve their character and propriety of pose and gesture. This naivete persists in nearly all his work, and distinguishes it sharply from Whistler's cosmopolitan cleverness."

The article concluded with a hint to the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest that the exhibition

afforded an opportunity of making some reparation for the long public neglect, or rather ignorance, of a master now happily discovered. Just before "The Times" article appeared, a little volume, the first appreciation of the work of Greaves, was published by a Chelsea gentleman whose faith in the artist had dated back to far earlier days. It was entitled "Greaves, Whistler, and Chelsea," and some of the illustrations were from original paintings still in my possession. The book was uniform with Whistler's "Ten o'Clock," and the exhibition created such a demand for it that copies are very rare indeed. The frontispiece is the best portrait of Walter Greaves I have ever seen, and the dedication (to myself) places on record the circumstance which led to my friendship with the painter and his family. For no one could have had greater gratification at Greaves's success from the exhibition onwards than I.

The exhibition was a great time for Mr. Greaves. Several thousand pounds' worth of his pictures were sold, and among the places to which they have gone is the City Gallery of Johannesburg, South Africa. Many people have wondered where Greaves's masterly full-length portrait of Carlyle has found a home. In my possession is a carefully finished preliminary sketch evidently done from life, and in no way does it imitate the Whistler portrait at Glasgow. It is a sepia drawing, measuring 6 in. by 11 in. and the choleric philosopher is shown wearing the big,

high-crowned felt hat with an enormous brim, a short dark overcoat, and a boldly-patterned tweed suit beneath. The face and figure are viewed at a three-quarter angle, with the face well lifted and gazing steadily to the left. The beard is white and bushy, and the eyes, as a critic has written, are, in the words of Anatole France, " drunk with reading." For Greaves knew Carlyle well. Mr. Brown tells an anecdote, in the pamphlet already referred to, which throws a good light on the attitude to life of the Chelsea sage—an anecdote repeated with embellishments in the recently issued " Whistler Journal," by E. R. and J. Pennell. Carlyle was well-known in the Chelsea of Greaves's day. Loafers would say, " Here is Carlyle, let's make him talk." Their greeting of " A fine morning, Mr. Carlyle !" would elicit only the surly response, " Tell me something I dinna ken."

It is with much pleasure that I see " The Times " again bringing the work of Walter Greaves prominently before its readers, and standing by the opinion expressed in its columns eleven years ago. The Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest, taking the hint which that newspaper gave them, have now purchased " Boat Race Day on Hammersmith Bridge " for the nation. " Like all simple and sincere art," " The Times " leader runs, " ' Hammersmith Bridge,' though painted long ago, looks fresher than many ingenious works that are anxiously ' in the movement.' It has, indeed, been called the first post-impressionist

picture, though it was painted when impressionism was new ; but in fact it is as English as the works of Hogarth. Mr. Greaves, like Hogarth, painted this crowd because he was interested in it, and not merely because he wanted to make a picture ; but, like Hogarth and unlike many other Englishmen, he also succeeded in making a picture of it. Those who notice its extreme naivete, should notice also that the stream of the crowd is not broken by any undue insistence on particulars : everything is interesting, yet everything is part of the whole : and that is why the picture looks fresh and modern, more modern, for instance, than Frith's 'Derby Day,' which, for all its considerable artistic merits, is difficult to grasp as a whole. Mr. Greaves is not a satirist, like Hogarth ; he enjoys life in this picture . . . without any desire to laugh at anyone : but his picture is a work of art and not a mere curiosity, because he has been able to express his enjoyment in a purely pictorial manner." The article concludes with the reminder that the compliment is paid to Mr. Greaves late in life and after many years of unrecognized, though delightful work. "He has paid the penalty both of his originality and of his unobtrusiveness, but we are glad that recognition has come to him at last within his lifetime." Those who know Walter Greaves will echo that expression of satisfaction by our leading organ of opinion, not only because of the acquirement by the nation of his picture, but because he has now been offered and accepted a home in the famous

Charterhouse. There his old age will be passed among surroundings that breathe of many a distinguished forerunner in fact or fiction—Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Charles Lamb, for example, and beloved Colonel Newcome.

CHAPTER XX

On Coming to an End. The work of a great Collector. Some priceless books at Hampstead. A note on Joseph Conrad. The Comedy and Pathos of Bookselling. My Experience at Law. A Charles Lamb Hoax. The Mysterious American. "I put up the Shutters."

"Now of all endings," as a contemporary has remarked in an essay which leaves no room for regret that Thackeray never wrote on the same theme; "now of all endings," says Mr. Hilaire Belloc, "of all comings to an End none is so hesitating as the ending of a book which the publisher will have so long and the writer so short: and the public (God Bless the Public) will have whatever it is given." I myself, that have had so much to do with other men's completed books, could give faint cause for dallying with my own. Nor will publisher and public alike be better pleased than that I should begin these closing words with the assurance that not yet, as I hope and believe, is there need for striking the melancholy note which Shakespeare would have us hear when he sang of chimney-sweepers, and how in the end even the fairest of men and

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK (After HOGARTH): The Rake's Progress. No. 8

maidens do as they. Rather would I compare the finish of my book to old Edwin Drew's sensations when he took his departure as a raw guest from a magnificent modern hotel. "I was quite the author," he told me, though he had never written a book in his life, "in my relief as I came to the final *page*!"

Relief? Ah yes, but I have some happy thoughts none the less, as I look back upon my brief sojourn in the old, quaint hostel of a bookman's memories. Comedy and pathos there have been in abundance, and if I have not communicated them to the reader it is due to my own feebleness as an author: perhaps in this closing chapter a last opportunity may yet be given me to redeem it. And if I have inadequately communicated the dignity that is undoubtedly a predominant quality in the bookman's enthralling pursuit, I am at fault again in the extra sense that I have purposely left until now my reference to the work of that most dignified and honoured of book-collectors, Mr. Thomas James Wise.

He would be ignorant indeed who knew nothing of Mr. Wise. Mr. Wise is one of the foremost collectors in Europe and his library is easily the first private library of its kind in England. I was no more than fifteen years old when I began to know him, and I am certain of one thing if I am certain of any in this uncertain universe, that Mr. Wise's success as a collector has not only been founded on his knowledge of bibliography, but also on his

knowledge of literature. The uncertain vagaries of fashion and the brief reign of " booms," as his friend Mr. Richard Curle tells us in the catalogue of his great library, have in no wise affected his judgment or his method, and with him it has always been the quality of the work that counts. So much is it quality and not age or reputation with which he is concerned that there is a perennial freshness and an unending delight merely in turning over the pages of the beautiful catalogue, which he is now compiling, and of which the two first volumes, just completed, form a gift I value more than I can say.

The earliest book I ever remember selling to Mr. Wise was a perfect copy of John Keats's " Poems," in boards, uncut, dated 1817, and I think that at the time of our transaction its value was ten pounds ! The most recent copy I have myself purchased was at Sotheby's, and the amount I was obliged to pay out was £380. Mr. Wise once chaffed me about his " bargain," over tea when I visited him and Mrs. Wise at his charming house in Hampstead. But, as I tell him, even had that ten pounds not been the legitimate price I would not be the loser. To me he has always been a true friend. On more than a dozen occasions my own private section of my library has been enriched with presentation copies of his great, world-famous bibliographies. Indeed I have felt myself so much in his debt that I sometimes express the wish that I might make some return to him in one way or another. But

I know I shall never be able to do so, for the simple reason that in his wonderful library there is practically every book he cares to collect.

A priceless library, I may add. Let me copy out a passage from Mr. Curle's introduction to the first volume of the catalogue of the Ashley Library, as it is called : from that alone may be gathered its scope :

" It seems invidious to pick out for special note any particular books, and yet I cannot forbear to draw attention to certain things of singular rarity and interest in the following short but representative list. ' Welth and Helth,' 1557 (only one other copy known), ' Gammer Gurton's Needle,' 1575 (the earliest English comedy of which any perfect copy is extant), Spenser's ' Faerie Queen,' 1590-6, Nashe's ' Terrors of the Night,' 1594 (only one other copy known, and that a poor one), Lyly's ' Woman in the Moone,' 1597 (only two or three copies known), Dekker's ' Satiro-Mastix,' 1602, Ben Jonson's ' Sejanus,' 1605 (only one other known on large paper : this is a presentation copy), Middleton's ' Roaring Girl,' 1611, Chapman's ' Widdowe's Teares,' 1612, Milton's ' Comus,' 1637 (the finest copy known), Herrick's ' Hesperides,' 1648 . . . Congreve's ' Incognita,' 1692 (one of three copies known), and his ' Impossible Thing, A Tale ' (of which the only other recorded copy is in the British Museum), Pope's ' Dunciad,' 1728 (large paper copy of the first issue of the first edition), . . . Blake's ' The Gates of Paradise,' 1793 (the only large paper

copy known), Byron's 'Fugitive Pieces,' 1806 (one of three known perfect copies), Landor's 'Idyllia,' 1815, Lamb's six separate 'Tales from Shakespeare,' 1807-11 (of none of these booklets are more than two other copies known), Shelley's 'Necessity of Atheism,' 1811 (one other perfect copy known), E. B. Browning's 'Battle of Marathon,' 1820 (the only uncut copy known and with a presentation inscription). . . ."

I suspect that a list like the foregoing would take some equalling, but what if we add to it a dozen books, of which Mr. Wise possesses the *only* known copies in existence?—

Prior's "Pindarique on His Majesty's Birthday," 1690, Pope's "God's Revenge against Punning," 1716, Gay's "To a Lady on her Passion for Old China," 1725, Landor's "Iambi," 1800, and his "Letters by Calvus," 1814, Coleridge's "Remarks on Sir Robert Peele's Bill," 1818, Byron's "The Irish Avatar," 1821, Fitzgerald's "Translations into Verse," 1829, Tennyson's "The Birth of Arthur," 1868, D. G. Rossetti's "The Streams Secret," 1870, and Swinburne's "Russia, an Ode," 1890.

Mr. Wise's set of Joseph Conrad's publications is a series of gifts from the author, with a signed explanatory note on the blank fly-leaf by Mr. Conrad himself. These are fascinating in themselves and of extreme value to the student. We learn, for example, that several people attempted to dramatise "Almayer's Folly," but in no case, even though among them were "a couple of

recognized playwrights," would the author approve of their results.

The title, " The Nigger of the Narcissus," was changed for America under protest. " The argument was that the American public would not read about a ' Nigger '." In the same volume " all the phonetics of Donkin's speech are wrong, alas ! A real cockney drops his aspirates, but he never adds one. It's the country people who do that. I have for this the undeniable authority of Mr. Edwin Pugh." " Nostromo " was serialised in England by " T. P.'s Weekly," whose readers were greatly annoyed, and complained in many letters that good space was being wasted on utterly unreadable stuff ! " Under Western Eyes" was very popular in Russia shortly before the war, serialised there, and issued in many cheap editions. More than thirty works by Mr. Conrad were privately printed or privately circulated. But all these facts, with countless others, are set out in Mr. Wise's Conrad Bibliography issued privately a couple of years ago.

. . . . . .

The comedy and pathos of bookselling are homespun threads intermingled in what to some of us is as fascinating as an oriental carpet, and there can be hardly a story or an event in the foregoing pages that is not so patterned. I am reminded by this of the sequel to a little occurrence which at an earlier stage I recalled in connection with Mr. Thomas Hardy. I related how I prevailed upon his generosity to affix his

autograph to a set of first editions of his novels which an American customer added to a collection of similarly autographed volumes by living writers for a Museum abroad.

I went to a great deal of trouble in gathering these hundreds of books together, and when I sent them to him eventually I enclosed my bill for a hundred and forty-nine pounds sixteen shillings. I had received in advance a hundred pounds on account, and I was nettled when the bill was returned to me by my customer with the remark that he did not consider he owed me a penny more as I had "obviously" charged too much. A large number of the volumes, he said, are novels, and "as for novels any busman can go along the bookstalls and pick them up blindfolded for a shilling each!" If I thought I could get any more money out of him I was welcome to go ahead and try!

Of course, knowing that he owed me every penny of what I had charged (in fact, if I had been wise before the event, I would have charged £75 for the Hardy volumes instead of £25) I instructed my solicitors, Messrs. Cholmondeley, Freer and Company, to begin proceedings. The case was brought before a judge in Chambers, who thought it ought to be settled by arbitration. I consented, and proposed that the arbitrators should be any one or two London booksellers whom my customer cared to name. But he refused point-blank to leave the matter to booksellers. "They are all alike," he wrote, and

suggested Mr. Horace B. Wheatley, a Pepys' authority. So it was arranged, and the next scene was laid at the Arbitration Court, in the Royal Courts of Justice.

My customer did not himself appear. He sent his librarian, a lady who offered Mr. Wheatley a choice buttonhole as soon as she saw him! Three or four American legal gentlemen, sent over by him, watched the proceedings, and the rows of Counsel representing both sides were enough to scare any bookman without a fortune behind him. The hearing lasted over three days, and Mr. Wheatley promised to give his award in two or three weeks. When the award came to me by the postman I opened the envelope with trembling fingers. But I could not have wished it to be better. Not only the balance but all the costs were awarded to me, making the amount up to £965, which with my customer's own costs must have increased to something like £2000! What a shock that gentleman in America must have had!... But when I think of the rare editions I had included in that collection, and their present market values, I can smile freely about it. And so can he, for he must be feeling that now he is getting his money back.

. . . . . .

Fifteen or twenty years ago I had offered to me from time to time several letters and short manuscripts alleged to be in the autograph of great men, Thackeray and George Washington among

them. There was even a parchment supposed to hold the handwriting of General Wolfe the day before the battle of Quebec. I am glad to be able to recall that I had sufficient knowledge of my business to pronounce them forgeries. Moreover, I endeavoured to put an end to what at that time was becoming a rather too prevalent practice : I laid traps for the particular genius who had not only made the forgeries but persuaded five or six people to offer them at the various dealers' shops, and these five or six dupes included several women. But I had to confess that he was too slippery for me.

Still he gave me at least one bright moment. A workingman came into my shop with a book under his arm :—Hone's Everyday Book, 1839, with a good many MS. marginal notes signed or initialled " Charles Lamb." He said to me :

" I understand you buy Lamb autographs, guv'nor."

" Yes," I answered, and I examined the book. " Are these notes supposed to be written in this volume by Charles Lamb ? " As I said it I knew that I had the mastery of at least one of those little swindling affairs.

" Oh yes," the man said, " the book came from a house close to where Lamb used to live at Edmonton."

I said : " Well, considering that Lamb died in 1834, five years before this book was published, how do you account for that ? "

He answered: "Well I dunno, guv'nor: perhaps it was another Charles Lamb." He was not in the least perturbed about it!

I imagine the business must have become unremunerative, because I have seen nothing either of the people who used to come with such innocent bearing into my shop, or of their forgeries, for several years.

. . . . . .

Moments just as bright come for myself or my assistants when an eager person calls and asks for one of the shilling numbers of a Dickens or Thackeray novel exhibited in the window, and when they express surprise and look rather hurt that I am not inclined to sell them for a shilling at this time of day! And ere my last page comes and I put up my shutters, so to speak, I will recall a brighter moment still: that of the arrival one evening—as it happens, just as I was about to fasten the shop door and close the shutters—of a truly raw-looking American who enquired the price of a "Tale of Two Cities" in the original monthly parts that he had seen from outside. I informed him that the figure was £80 for the complete set.

He gazed hard at me for a moment, and said (in American): "Look here, sir, I asked you a civil question, and I want a civil answer."

"I am perfectly civil," I answered again. "Eighty pounds."

He bridled up at that, and began to bluster, advising me not to try and "come" it over him.

AN IMPORTANT AUTOGRAPH OF CHARLES LAMB.

In an album belonging to the Reverend William Creswell, Vicar of Enfield, Charles Lamb wrote his well-known sonnet, *Cheap Gifts* (afterwards printed, with some slight alteration, in the *Athenæum* for February 15, 1834), and pasted above the poem the actual paper flower which inspired it.

The flower and the sonnet are here reproduced. At the extreme top of the page on which they appear are written, also in Lamb's handwriting and signed by him, the following words:

> "In a leaf of an old Quarto the 'Lives of the Saints, written in Spanish by the learned and reverend father Alfonso Villegas, Divine, of the Order of St. Dominick, set forth in English by John Heigham, Anno 1630,' bought at a Catholic Book Shop in Duke Street, Lincolns Inn Fields, I found, carefully inserted, a painted Flower, seemingly co-eval with the Book itself; and did not for some time discover, that it opened in the middle, and was the cover to a very humble Draught of a St. Anne, with the Virgin and Child, doubtless the performance of some poor, but pious, Catholic, whose meditations it assisted."

O lift with reverent hand that tarnish'd Flower,
That 'shrines beneath her modest canopy,
Memorials dear to Romish piety,
Dim specks .. rude shapes .. of Saints! in fervent hour
The work perchance of some meek Devotee
Who, poor in worldly treasures to set forth
The Sanctities she worshipt to their worth,
In this imperfect tracery might see
Hints, that all Heaven did to her sense reveal.
Cheap gifts best fit poor givers. We are told
Of the lone Mite .. the Cup of Water cold
That in their way approved the Offerer's zeal.
True Love shews costliest where the means are scant;
And, in her reckoning, they "abound, who want".

AN IMPORTANT AUTOGRAPH OF CHARLES LAMB

(See opposite page)

I endeavoured to humour him, but that only made him angrier, and redder in the face.

" After all," I said, " the book is a first edition, and you'd have to pay eighty pounds for it anywhere."

" I know it's a first edition," he snapped, " I know just as much about it as you do ! "

I didn't deny it. He turned suddenly to the door and called to someone waiting outside for him.

" Come in, Bill," he exclaimed. " Come inside and listen to the yarn this Goddam cad is trying to pull over me ! "

Of course I could not go on humouring such a man, or rather, trying to humour him, for ever ; and by this time I was getting a little warm myself. But I resolved to keep calm a few minutes longer, and continued my bantering note. At length the man said :

" Look here, sir : away yonder in the States I have a dozen of that there ' Tale of Two Cities,' first editions every one of them. I'll test you. Will you give me half—mind you, I ask no more than half !—of what you are trying to skin out of me for every copy I send over to you ? "

" Certainly," I answered. " I'll give you £40 apiece. But they must be in as good condition as this is, and ' firsts '."

He waived the conditions airily aside, and took down my name and address very carefully. Then he departed in the company of his friend, and I proceeded to lock the shop door and put up the shutters.

Why that scene ever occurred is still a mystery to me ; for of course I have not seen or heard anything more of him to this day.

And so I come to an end. My last thought is for the books I have gathered round me these forty years at 27 New Oxford Street, and for the marvellously varied types of customer, rich men (to whom I have given plenty of space already) and, poor men who often have made it hard to me to check my emotion as I watch them wistfully laying down the books they cannot afford to buy, or, for a coveted old volume, parting with what is plainly a shilling of which they have needed to reckon every half-penny. They flicker before me in a never-ending, silent panorama, these known and unknown book-lovers, a great dignity about them as they move in the shadow of many shelves, for they take on something of the lasting serenity of those everlasting books. . . . I come to an end, I say, and once again I put up the shutters.

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